

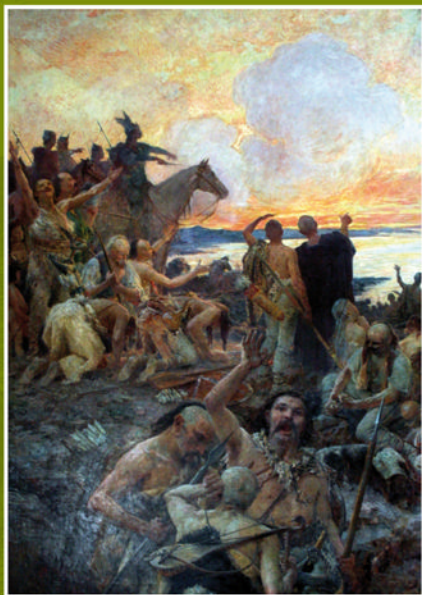
EAST CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE IN THE MIDDLE AGES, 450-1450

Becoming Slav, Becoming Croat

*Identity Transformations in Post-Roman
and Early Medieval Dalmatia*



Danijel Dzino



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General Editor
Florin Curta

VOLUME 12

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Identity Transformations in Post-Roman
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By

Danijel Dzino



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In memoriam



My grandparents

Nenad Ostojić (1920–2004) and
Kosara Ostojić (1923–2009)

I miss you both.

To Barbara, with love

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This book has had an unusual way of coming into being. Reaching for Florin Curta's book *The making of the Slavs* one slow afternoon in the Barr-Smith library of the Adelaide University bugged me so much so that I needed to write a review of it for the Croatian journal *Diadora*. The review, while still unpublished, was noticed by Ivan Mužić who asked me to write an introduction for his new book, *Hrvatska Povijest Devetog Stoljeća*. That introduction was noticed by Denis Alimov, who asked me to write an article for the volume of *Studia Slavica et Balcanica* Petropolitana, dedicated to Curta's book. The article was finally read by Curta himself, who proposed that I expand it into a book. The circle was finally completed, taking me into the dark and unexplored areas of post-Roman Dalmatia for the next year and a half.

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NOTES

This book is an elaboration on my earlier article: “‘Becoming Slav”, “Becoming Croat”: New approaches in research of identities in post-Roman Illyricum”, *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 14 (2008): 195–206, also published with changes in Russian as: “‘Становиться славянином», «становиться хорватом”: новые направления в исследовании идентичностей позднеантичного и раннесредневекового Иллирика”, *Studia Slavica and Balcanica Petropolitana* 2/2008: 37–58.

Almost all written sources relating to post-Roman Dalmatia and the early Croat state have been collected in Rački’s *Documenta* from 1877. However, the MGH is preferred to Rački, because Rački is not widely available to English-speaking scholars, and the CD is also preferred to Rački because it gives a better and more up to date analysis of the primary sources than Rački. Thus, Rački is referenced only if there are no other sources. Primary sources are referred to by their chapters or years (for the Annals), not by the pages from the modern editions, except where indicated in the list of primary sources.

There are some other things reader should observe:

- The names of the Croat dukes are given in the Croatian transcription, while the most frequent Latin transcriptions are listed at their first mention, in the index; and in the list of Dalmatian and Croat rulers, which is in the appendix, p. 219.
- The term ‘East Roman’ is applied until the end of Heraclius’ rule in 640, and the term ‘Byzantine/Byzantines’ (which is a modern construct describing the state of the *Rhomaioi*) after it.
- The English language enables the possibility for a distinction between modern and historical identities, which do not exist in the other languages. This book uses the term ‘Croat/Croats’ to distinguish pre-modern identities from the term ‘Croatian/Croatians’, depicting the more recent identity-construction.
- The term ‘post-Roman’ applies to the period between the East Roman withdrawal and Carolingian political expansion in Dalmatia (c. 620–800), and ‘early medieval’ for later period, after c. 800.

- The term 'ethnogenesis' with quotation marks refers to the scholarly metanarrative developed after the work of Wenskus, while the term ethnogenetic processes, or ethnogenesis without quotation marks, refers to the discourse on the *longue durée* process of evolution of nations from an ethnic core in Eastern European scholarship – see pp. 38–9 for more details.
- The term 'Old-Croat' refers to the archaeological culture only, and does not imply ethnicity.
- Archaeological sites are often referred to irregularly in the Croatian archaeological literature, in regard to the more or less narrow locality. This book refers to the sites in the following ways: the narrower locality is always written before the less narrow locality, e.g. Ždrijac-Nin refers to the narrow locality of Ždrijac, just outside of the town of Nin.
- The geographical term Dalmatia relates to the ancient understanding of the term – the space between Istria, the river Sava and the Adriatic coast, modern southern Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The actual Roman province of Dalmatia did not spread all the way to the river Sava, but in the later period the boundary was understood to be on that river. For convenience, this book will apply the term Dalmatia to all the regions up to the river Sava.

ABBREVIATIONS

AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i> . New York.
AJPh	<i>American Journal of Philology</i> . Baltimore MD.
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> . Berlin and New York.
ANUBiH	Akademija nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine. Sarajevo.
ARR	<i>Arheološki Radovi i Rasprave (Acta et Dissertationes Archaeologicae)</i> . Zagreb.
AV	<i>Arheološki Vestnik (Acta Archaeologica)</i> . Ljubljana.
BAR	<i>British Archaeological Reports – International Series</i> . Cambridge.
BF	<i>Byzantinische Forschungen</i> . Amsterdam.
CAH	<i>Cambridge Ancient History</i> . Cambridge.
CBI	Centar za Balkanološka Ispitivanja. Sarajevo.
CCP	<i>Croatica Christiana Periodica</i> . Zagreb.
CSSH	<i>Comparative Studies in Sociology and History</i> . Ann Arbor MI.
Diadora	<i>Diadora: The Journal of the Archaeological Museum in Zadar</i> . Zadar.
Dubrovnik	<i>Dubrovnik: The Journal for Literature and Science</i> . Dubrovnik.
DOP	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i> . Cambridge MA.
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i> . Oxford.
EJA	<i>European Journal of Archaeology</i> . London and Thousand Oaks CA.
EME	<i>Early Medieval Europe</i> . Harlow UK.
ERS	<i>Ethnic and Racial Studies</i> . London and New York.
GCBI	<i>Godišnjak Centra za Balkanološka Ispitivanja</i> . Sarajevo.

GZMS	<i>Glasnik Zemaljskog Muzeja u Sarajevu</i> , new series. Sarajevo 1946-.
HAM	<i>Hortus Artium Medievalium</i> . Motovun and Zagreb.
HAD	Publications of Croatian Archaeological Society.
<i>HistAntiq</i>	<i>Histria Antiqua</i> . Pula.
HZ	<i>Historijski Zbornik</i> . Zagreb.
IČ	<i>Istorijski Časopis</i> . Belgrade.
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i> . London.
JRA	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i> . Portsmouth RI.
Loeb	Loeb Classical Library.
MEFRA	<i>Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome</i> . Rome.
MGH	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i> .
MGH: AA	MGH: <i>Auctores Antiquissimi</i> .
MGH: Epp.	MGH: <i>Epistolae</i> .
MGH: Poetae	MGH: <i>Poetae Latini medii aevi</i> .
MGH: SS	MGH: <i>Scriptores rerum Germanicarum</i> .
MGH: SS rer. Merov.	MGH: <i>Scriptorum rerum Merovingicarum</i> .
MGH: SS rer. Germ.	MGH: <i>Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi</i> .
MGH: SS rer. Lang.	MGH: <i>Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum</i> . Saec. VI–IX.
MHAS	Muzej Hrvatskih Arheoloških Spomenika. Split.
MHAS: Cat. & Mon.	MHAS: Catalogues and Monographs. Split.
MHAS: Monumenta	MHAS: <i>Monumenta Medii Aevi Croatiae</i> . Split.
NCMH	<i>The New Medieval Cambridge History</i> . Cambridge.
<i>Obavijesti HAD</i>	<i>Obavijesti Hrvatskog Arheološkog Društva</i> . Zagreb.
JiČ	<i>Jugoslovenski Istorijski Časopis</i> . Belgrade.
OA	<i>Opuscula Archaeologica</i> . Zagreb.
PBSR	<i>Papers of the British School at Rome</i> . Rome.
<i>PovPr</i>	<i>Povijesni prilozi</i> . Zagreb.
<i>Prilozi</i>	<i>Prilozi Instituta za Arheologiju u Zagrebu</i> . Zagreb.

<i>Rad JAZU</i>	<i>Radovi Jugoslavenske Akademije Znanosti i Umjetnosti. Zagreb.</i>
<i>RFFZd</i>	<i>Radovi Filozofskog Fakulteta u Zadru. Zadar.</i>
<i>RZHP</i>	<i>Radovi Zavoda za Hrvatsku Povijest. Zagreb.</i>
<i>RZPZ HAZU</i>	<i>Radovi Zavoda za Povijesne Znanosti Hrvatske Akademije Znanosti i Umjetnosti u Zadru. Zadar.</i>
<i>SANU</i>	<i>Srpska Akademija Nauka i Umetnosti. Belgrade.</i>
<i>Settimane</i>	<i>Settimane di studio del centro Italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo. Spoleto.</i>
<i>SHP</i>	<i>Starohrvatska Prosvjeta, series III. Split 1949–.</i>
<i>SS&BP</i>	<i>Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana. St. Petersburg.</i>
<i>VAHD/VAPD</i>	<i>Vjesnik za Arheologiju/Povijest Dalmatinsku. Split.</i>
<i>VAMZ</i>	<i>Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu, series III. Zagreb 1958–.</i>
<i>WMBHL</i>	<i>Wissenschaftliche Mitteilungen des Bosnisch-Herzegowinischen Landesmuseums. Sarajevo.</i>
<i>ZHZ JAZU/ZHZ HAZU</i>	<i>Zbornik Historijskog Zavoda Jugoslavenske/Hrvatske Akademije Znanosti i Umjetnosti. Zagreb.</i>
<i>ZČ</i>	<i>Zgodovinski Časopis. Ljubljana</i>
<i>ZRVI</i>	<i>Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta. Belgrade.</i>
<i>ŽAnt</i>	<i>Živa Antika. Skopje.</i>

COLLECTIONS OF EPIGRAPHIC INSCRIPTIONS

AE	<i>L'Année Épigraphique</i> . Paris 1888–.
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptiones Latinorum</i> . Berlin 1828–.
CIRB	<i>Corpus inscriptionum Regni Bosporani</i> (<i>Копныч Боспорских надписей</i>). Moscow and Leningrad (=St. Petersburg) 1965.
IDR	<i>Inscriptiile Daciei Romanae</i> , ed. Russu et al. Bucharest 1977–.
ILBulg	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae in Bulgaria repertae</i> I–IV, ed. G. Mihailov. Sofia 1958–1970.
ILS	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> , ed. H. Dessau. Berlin 1892–1916.
ILJug	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Iugoslavia inter annos MCMII et MCMLXX repertae et editae sunt</i> , ed. A. Šašel and J. Šašel. Situla 5, 19, 25. Ljubljana 1963, 1978, 1986.
IRB	<i>Inscriptiones Regni Bosporani graecae et latinae. Inscriptiones antiquae orae septentrionalis Ponti Euxini graecae et latinae</i> . Vol. II, ed. B. Latyshev. St. Petersburg 1890.
LEMCro	<i>Latin Epigraphic Monuments in Early Medieval Croatia</i> , ed. V. Delonga (Delonga 1996: 43–259).

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INTRODUCTION

The events known as the 'South Slav migrations' from the 6th and 7th centuries AD, still remain as insufficiently explained events in the historiography. The diverse ethnic identities of groups in the western part of the ancient Balkan Peninsula, known as Illyricum in Roman and post-Roman times, were transformed into new identities, such as the Croats, Serbs, Diocleans, Arentani, Zachlumi, etc. after those migrations. The prevailing metanarrative of these events explains the change that occurred through migration, that the arriving 'Slavs' flooded Illyricum in huge numbers and assimilated or exterminated the indigenous population, 'romanised Illyrians' as they were mostly referred to. This transformation of group identities was a process that has had a continuous impact on the discursive constructions of ethnic and regional identities in the area until the present times, as modern ethnic groups in this part of the world still imagine themselves in scholarly and public discourses as the successors of those 'Slavic' arrivals.

The aim of this study is to attempt to assess the consequences that the recently developed poststructuralist views on culture and identity might have in the interpretation of social transformations in post-Roman Dalmatia, until its inclusion in the Carolingian world in the 9th century. It will be concerned with the mechanisms of formation and the reasons for transformation from the pre-Slavic group identities of Late Antiquity to those perceived as 'Slavic' identities in medieval times, in a time frame between c. AD 400–900. For the volume of this topic, emphasis is placed on the process of construction of the Croat identity in the post-Roman and early medieval Dalmatia, but it is also strongly suggested that similar processes, certainly with significant regional peculiarities and differences, occurred in other parts of post-Roman Illyricum with other 'Slavic' identities. The impact of those early medieval identities on the discursive construction of modern identities in the area, and the changing perception of these events in the modern imagination, is also briefly surveyed in Chapter 1, in order to show their ongoing contemporary importance in this region.

The author hopes that besides a narrow, specialist audience of scholars and students of late antique and early medieval history, as well as the unfortunately termed 'Balkan studies', this study might also make a

modest contribution to our understanding of the development of modern ethnic identities in the region. The perception of origins amongst current ethnic groups in the whole area today known as Southeastern Europe, or the 'Balkans', has been significantly influenced by discourses on the past which were formed as part of more recent political ideologies. The outside perception was also frequently shaped by a similar relation between historical discourses and modern political ideologies in a western popular and scholarly literature which dealt with early medieval identities in this region.¹ While other current research on ancient and medieval identities implicitly affected the self-understanding of contemporary European ethnic groups and nations, the politicised nature of contemporary Southeastern Europe makes the results of this study very significant to modern issues, as well as to scholarship which deals with Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages.

Geography

Southeastern Europe is a perfect example to confirm the old Braudelian view that geography and history are inextricably intertwined; thus, when discussing history, it is always useful to say a few words about the geography of the region. The geographic terminology regarding this area is complex, as it usually reflects more recent western political and colonial constructions, but certain terms also have different meanings in the different historical periods. The terms 'Yugoslavia' or the 'former Yugoslavia', are today untenable; the frequently used term 'Western Balkans' is nothing more than a remainder of the colonial discourse on the 'Balkans' from earlier times. Under the term 'western Illyricum' this book understands the space of the Roman provinces of Dalmatia and Pannonia, present-day eastern Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, western Serbia, Montenegro, Albania and the southern

¹ E.g. for wider audience Malcolm 1996: 1–13 or more scholarly Bellamy 2003: 33–5, both drew upon old or irrelevant literature on the early Middle Ages of the region. Malcolm 1996 and Donia and Fine 1994 are interesting, as they are works by outside observers who have attempted to construct a new historical narrative for Bosnia and Herzegovina by imposing their subjective personal experiences of a western multicultural society, thus creating a new 'historical reality', which might function inside the modern discourse on multiculturalism, but do not help to understand the past of the region.

parts of Hungary, with their adjacent regions, in particular in relation to Istria. The term Dalmatia in this book corresponds with Roman provincial terminology, which lasted well into medieval times, rather than modern terminology that relates to the Croatian coast south of Istria. Ancient and early medieval Dalmatia encompassed the space between the eastern coast of the Adriatic almost to the river Sava, which in modern-day terminology is the southern part of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, while the terms 'coastal Dalmatia' and the 'Dalmatian hinterland' are used to distinguish the eco-geographical zones inside that space. The focus of this book purposely narrows from late antique Illyricum to post-Roman and early medieval Dalmatia, focusing on the early medieval Croat identity in the northern part of coastal Dalmatia. This narrowing of focus corresponds with the political, economic, and identity-fragmentation that occurred in the post-Roman period, but also with the quantity of currently available material and written evidence, which is quite scarce for the Dalmatian hinterland.

Roman Dalmatia has two distinctly different eco-geographical zones: the coast and the hinterland. A narrow eastern Adriatic coastal-belt together with the Italian coast opposite it represents a very distinctive geo-cultural unit that was linked, rather than divided, by the sea. This zone was strongly connected to the rest of the Mediterranean world, and archaeology reveals the strong impact of ancient Mediterranean global processes, even before the Greek colonisation of the central Adriatic islands in the fourth century BC, and the subsequent Roman conquest in the first century BC. The numerous islands in the eastern Adriatic island archipelago had a significant quantity of arable land, and the larger islands were inhabited in ancient times, in particular the central Adriatic islands of Vis, Hvar and Korčula, but also the North Adriatic islands in the gulf of Kvarner, such as Cres, Krk, Rab, etc. The coast is mostly separated from the hinterland by mountain-chains, and there are only a few plains in the immediate hinterland between Zadar and Split, or the fertile and swampy alluvial plains in the lower stream of the Neretva. There are only a few passes which enable communication with the hinterland, such as the pass through the Velebit Mountain near Senj, the pass of Klis behind Solin near Split, and the valley of the river Neretva, which stretched deep inland towards the north.

The coast has a few distinctive micro-geographical regions. From the gulf of Kvarner to the river Zrmanja lays a very narrow coastal strip

where the mountain Velebit separates the coast from the hinterland area of Lika and Gorski Kotar. The Ravni Kotari plains are situated from the river Zrmanja to the river Krka, and have a significant amount of arable land, compared with the rest of the coast. This area, also known as Liburnia, was one of the most urbanised areas of the eastern Adriatic in the late Iron Age before the Roman conquest. After the conquest, it was characterised by the openness of its indigenous inhabitants for Roman imperial values (so-called 'romanisation'). The most dominant city in the sub-region was Iader (Zadar), an indigenous city which became a Roman colony in the 1st century BC. However, there were more important urban units in the Ravni Kotari, such as Aenona (Nin), built on the land area of c. 0.3 km², protected by a moat and city walls and positioned in the lagoon of the bay of Nin. Between the rivers Krka and Cetina lies the central Dalmatian coast, which encompasses the Bay of Kašteli where Salona, the capital of Roman Dalmatia, was situated, between the former Greek colonies of Tragurion (Tragurium, Trogir) and Epetion (Epetium, Stobreč). In the early 4th century, the emperor Diocletian, a native of Salona, built his famous palace between Salona and Epetium, which became the core of early medieval settlement known as Spalatum (Split). Further south, towards the river Neretva, the coastal strip was isolated from the hinterland by the Mosor-Biokovo mountain chains, and only in the valley of Neretva does it open towards the north with a significant amount of alluvial plains, which became the position for the important Roman centre of Narona (Vid near Metković). Further towards the south in antiquity was positioned Epidaurum (Cavtat), and towards the Albanian coast the important regional centres of Apollonia, Scodra and Dyrrachium (Durrës), in present-Day Albania.

In the hinterland begins the intermediary zone of the Dinaric Alps, which stretch in a northwest-southeast direction, parallel with the coast. The mountain chain divides the warm Mediterranean climate of the coast from the cold sub-continental climate, which dominates the hinterland. The Dinaric Alps were a major physical obstacle in pre-modern times and there are only a few passes, the valleys of the rivers Krka, Neretva, Bosna, Drina, Una, and Vrbas, which offered the possibility for communication between the coast and the north. The southern part of the hinterland, the present-day regions of Lika, Gorski Kotar, Herzegovina and Montenegro, are dominated by the *karst* – the mountainous landscape made of porous limestone, characterised by a lack of surface water and poor vegetation. The dominance of the

karst was only interrupted by the more densely settled plains - *poljes*,² which were occasional depressions between the mountains with fertile soil, such as the Sinjsko *polje*, Livanjsko *polje*, Glamočko *polje*, etc. The mountainous northern part, the present-day regions of Kordun, Krajina and Bosnia, was covered by thick forests and showed an abundance of vegetation. The region did not offer much opportunity for agriculture or settlement, but there were significant deposits of metal ores in this area, which the Romans were able to exploit. In the very north, in the valley of the Sava – the present-day regions of Banovina and Posavina, Dalmatia opened towards the Pannonian plains, and what is today Central and Eastern Europe.

What this book is about

Cultural and ethnic identity has become a prominent topic of discussion in recent decades amongst historians and archaeologists working in the fields of ancient and medieval history. This new interest has led to a fundamental questioning of the previous metanarratives of historical knowledge, a re-examination of the nature and meaning of the available evidence, as well as key concepts in regards to cultural interaction, such as ‘romanisation’, or the ‘great migrations’ of Late Antiquity. There is a significant recent shift in scholarly attention to focus on identity-formation amongst ancient peoples in the Mediterranean, especially the Greeks and Romans. Some of these works include a re-assessment of the ethnic and cultural identity of the ‘barbarians’, such as the Iron Age populations of Western, Central and Northern Europe, known as the ‘Celts’ and ‘Germans’ to our sources, and other groups outside of the ancient Mediterranean. Important work has been done regarding group identities during the breakdown of the Western Roman Empire and the nature of the *Völkerwanderung* in the 5th and 6th centuries AD. The question of the disappearance, absorption and shift in ethnic identities in the late antique and early medieval period is a very active and wide field of study; there are numerous comparable studies dealing with roughly the same periods that this book intends to cover. These concern the question of Romano-British identities under the Anglo-Saxons, the Gallo-Romans and the Franks, the population of Italy and the Ostrogoths, etc. More recently

² Sing. *polje*, e.g. Livanjsko *polje* – the *polje* of Livno.

the focus of scholarly interest has shifted towards Eastern and Southeastern Europe, the 'other' Europe, which was sorely missing from Anglophone general history books only a generation ago.³

The indigenous pre-Slavic population of the western and central Balkan Peninsula, known in antiquity and medieval times as Illyricum, represented a significant portion of the ancient population of what would become Europe. Scholarship remains content with a very general assessment of their identity as 'Illyrians', which is, in fact, a more recent pseudo-ethnic construction that relies on a generalisation from Graeco-Roman written sources and is paralleled by similar models of 'Indo-European', 'Germanic', or 'Celtic' pseudo-ethnic cultural blocs. The awareness of 'Illyrian' heterogeneity has increased significantly in the last generation or two of scholars, but the general perception of 'Illyrianness' as a loose cultural/ethnic framework is still not fully broken in scholarly and popular perceptions. This region was conquered by the Roman Empire in a series of mostly unconnected conflicts with the indigenous groups, ending in the early 1st century AD. Life inside *imperium Romanum* offered the indigenous population different ways for reconstructing their existing identities inside the frameworks offered by Roman imperial ideology; different ways in which they "became Roman".⁴ Instead of maintaining earlier identities from pre-Roman times, the indigenous inhabitants of Illyricum formed different identities, which was the consequence of negotiating their identities on social or even individual scale inside a basic provincial identity-framework. These identities were formed through an ecological and regional basis, in particular sub-regions, such as the Adriatic littoral with the immediate hinterland, the Dinaric Alps, and the Pannonian plains. This process continued with the arrival of Christianity, which took different forms relating to regional circumstances, from early cosmopolitan Christianity in the coastal cities, to the specific religious forms in the hinterland, which became more substantially Christianised only in the mid-6th century AD.

More recent accounts of early medieval history of the region were concerned with the Slavic settlement, in particular with the re-examination of Slavic identity in the period of the 'Slav migrations' in the 6th – 7th centuries AD. Some of these studies introduced a new

³ E.g. Curta 2006.

⁴ The concept for the analysis of transformation of identities in Roman Gaul was developed in Woolf 1998.

view into the nature of Slavic identity, seeing it as a recent construct of the Byzantine sources, which ethnicised the stereotypes applied to the description of heterogeneous but culturally similar migrating groups, which originally had no sense of a common identity.⁵ However, the studies which dealt specifically with western Illyricum, or the appearance and construction of the earliest Croat identity, made no new attempt to answer the question of why the identities of an indigenous population were recast so quickly and thoroughly, and what was the impact of immigrant groups in this process. Thus, the picture remains generally very unclear and has been significantly impacted by the works of the regional scholarship, which, besides their scholarly excellence and diligence, on occasion reflect modern ethnic discourses, and primordial understanding of identity as unchangeable. On the other hand, in the rare works of Anglophone scholarship which focus on the problem, it is possible to recognise tendencies which easily dismiss and marginalize the very detailed and knowledgeable accounts of historians and archaeologists from the area.⁶

This problem of identity-shift between late antique and early medieval identities remains unsolved, and its importance is amplified by the fact that it still directly and indirectly impacts upon the self-perception and construction of modern ethnic identities in the region. These modern constructions often use accounts of ancient and medieval identities from the region in order to redefine existing modern identities, juxtaposing 'Us' and 'Them' from the past and present, and thus significantly impacting the development of contemporary ethnic discourses.

The existing theoretical framework for understanding ethnicity and identity-change in post-Roman Illyricum is still overly influenced by an evolutionist approach, with the view of ethnicity as a primordial, permanent, social phenomenon, which changes at the surface but remains stable at its 'core'. It understands that, once developed, ethnicity slowly evolves through historical 'layers' and 'sub-layers', instead of analysing the social contexts of identity-formation and interaction, as well as the hierarchies of power and the relationships between political

⁵ In particular Curta 2001a.

⁶ Fine 2006 recently strongly criticised the premises upon which rests the perception of Croat pre-modern ethnicity in Croatian historiography, although it must be noted that some of his criticism was driven by emotional and personal, rather than scholarly, issues, see Greble Balić 2008. See most recently Budak 2009a, who highlights factual errors and ideological discourses in Fine's book.

power and group identity.⁷ Furthermore, the explanation predominantly used in archaeological studies, which assumes that certain artefacts, such as fibulae or pottery, may be used as a detector of ethnicity, is not fully satisfactory today. True, some artefacts could influence the making of stereotypes and the perception of a group by the external observer, or even, in time, become an emblem of the group when and if the group wished to be self-defined, but they cannot be used as detectors of group identity, *per se*. This framework does not provide answers that would explain identity-construction in light of the more recent socio-anthropological theories, and the increased general understanding of identity-shifts, the developments of different group identities and the sudden disappearance of other groups from the historical stage.

As stated earlier, this book uses theoretical approaches which have been widely used in recent times in studies of ancient and medieval history, as well as archaeology, for the significant problem of identity-transformation in post-Roman and early medieval Dalmatia. The perpetual problem in this field was the split in research focus for textual and material evidence, which were rarely and very selectively integrated in individual studies.⁸ The new discoveries and methods in other fields, such as the history of cultures/mentalities/group identities which place emphasis on processes rather than on static identities, are an important part of the methodological framework that this study is based on. Especially important is the modern socio-anthropological approach to ethnicity as a fluid and changeable phenomenon, the instrument that social groups use to achieve their political or economic goals, largely determined through social interaction, self-identification of the group in question and its identification by outsiders. So, this study is part of a much wider scholarly dialogue that redefines, deconstructs, but also restructures the approach to the nature of ethnic identity in the late antique and early medieval period. The problem of identity-change requires a somewhat wider geographic perspective that would encompass the western part of Southeastern Europe,⁹

⁷ See the criticism of this approach in the early Slavic archaeology in Curta 2002.

⁸ The same problem is applicable to the early medieval historians and archaeologists in the wider context of research in the early medieval West, see Hills 2007; Symonds 2009: 51 ff.

⁹ Curta 2006 provided a significant improvement in the treatment of this region, from the earlier colonial construct of the 'Balkans' as a negative reflection of Europe, cf. Todorova 1997. For successful research into Southeastern Europe as a

and its placement in a comparative perspective with areas where the process of identity-transition in this period occurred on similar grounds.

As much as some ideas expressed in this book might sound novel, no study can be developed nowadays *ex nihilo*. It is certainly important, and indeed my pleasure to state here that this study could not be possible without the large corpus of existing scholarship, especially the groundbreaking studies in early Croat identity and history by Walter Pohl, Neven Budak and Mladen Ančić, as well as the sweeping regional surveys of the Slav migrations by Florin Curta. This book in particular attempts to bridge the gap between regional history and archaeology, but also the gap between regional Late Antiquity and early medieval studies, which in more recent times have been frequently observed separately from each other, with some recent successful attempts to put them back together.¹⁰ A general disregard of the pre-Slavic population of Illyricum and Roman Dalmatia has resulted in a slavenocentric picture of early medieval history of the region and the perception of Slavophone medieval polities in the region as ‘Slav’. Hopefully, this study will initiate more debates about the indigenous population and their interaction with ‘Slav’ immigrants.

This book is divided into seven chapters:

Chapter 1: Croat origins in the Croatian imagination

This chapter will deal with the discourse of Croat migrations in popular, political, literary and scholarly perceptions of the Croatians and those interested in them. The change from late antique identities into Slavophone identities in Dalmatia has been explained from the Renaissance onwards, through one of two grand-narratives: the ‘migrationist’ and the ‘autochthonist’, which have sometimes been combined to a certain degree. The ‘migrationist’ narrative implies that the change occurred because of the arrival/immigration of a new ethno-cultural

geo-historical macro-system, it is necessary to focus on its sub-regions, such as the western belonging to the Balkan Peninsula, especially in the context of the appearance of ‘Slavic’ identities, I. Rendić-Miočević 2002: 2.

¹⁰ Šišić 1925 was the last attempt to integrate these periods for a long time. In more recent times Andrić 2002 and especially Gračanin 2007b are useful for dealing with this period for south Pannonia.

group. The interpretations of the arrival of the Croats differed in the scholarship, whether the arriving group was seen as belonging to the 'Slavs' or as a separate non-Slavic group, such as the Goths, Turks or Iranians. The 'autochthonist' narrative emphasises the importance of a cultural continuity in Dalmatia and in wider context Illyricum, and minimises the importance of migrations, arguing that the indigenous population accepted the Slavic language(s) in the process of acculturation. This chapter will survey the changing attitudes towards this issue in relation to the processes of construction of modern identities in the region, up to the most recent times.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and the sources

This chapter will define the methodological framework based on multidisciplinary approaches. It will briefly discuss new developments in the general scholarship on identities and the impact of socio-anthropological research on ethnicity. Also, there will be a brief survey of the poststructuralist attitudes towards history, in particular the relation of discourse and power, the *habitus* theory of Bourdieu, and the postcolonial literary criticism. This chapter will connect these conceptual and theoretical frameworks with the most recent research of identities in ancient and medieval history and archaeology. The discussion will review the current state of scholarship which deals with identity-transformations in Late Antiquity, as well as bringing forth current regional historical and archaeological studies dealing with this period.

Chapter 3: Identities in Illyricum before the Slavs

In order to understand the identity-shift which happened in late antique and early medieval times, it is necessary to take a small step backwards and have a more thorough look into the pre-Slavic indigenous population. This chapter will make a brief overview of the development of group identities in Roman Illyricum, from the indigenous population in the late Iron Age to the identities constructed during the Roman rule over this region, all the way to the late antique population. It will discuss the issues of acculturation, social changes and changes in identity-constructions in the region, as well as the social and political transformations which occurred in Late Antiquity.

*Chapter 4: The history of Illyricum in Late Antiquity 378-600:
a very brief overview*

The transformation of identities in the post-Roman region of Dalmatia took place in very specific historical contexts within Late Antiquity. In order to understand these contexts this chapter looks briefly into the political and social changes which occurred in the region, detectable through the narratives in the written sources. It also explores the evidence which emerged from the material sources, in particular the change in settlement pattern and the appearance of the earliest row-grave cemeteries in Dalmatia in the 5th and 6th centuries.

*Chapter 5: Written sources on the Slav migrations in the 6th
and 7th centuries*

This chapter will survey the primary written sources which deal with the arrival of the groups known as the Sclavenes in Illyricum, such as Procopius or Jordanes, as well as the later mediaeval sources on the sack of the largest Dalmatian city of Salona, such as the *Historia Salonitana* by Thomas, the Archdeacon of Spalatum. However, the most significant attention will be placed on the work *De Administrando Imperio* (DAI), written by the Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, the most frequently used written source which deals with the arrival of the Croats and Serbs. Previous scholarship has attempted to establish that certain parts of the arrival story in this work can be used as a more or less reliable source. This chapter will argue that the DAI is, at its core, an insufficiently reliable source for events from the 7th century. It reflects different historical narratives, in particular Byzantine 'orientalism', the construction of 'Hellenism' by the Macedonian dynasty of Constantine VII, and a mixture of historical memories, political ideology and oral legends from the region, but also their misconceptions by the outside Byzantine observer.

Chapters 6 and 7: 'The Dark Ages'

These chapters will discuss social and identity-transformations in post-Roman Illyricum, following the period of Slavene movements in the 6th and 7th centuries. Focus will be placed upon the development of 'Roman' and 'Slav' identities in the Dalmatian coastal cities and

hinterland. As this is an exceptionally poorly documented period, historically and archaeologically, parallels will be drawn with similar areas in Western Europe, such as early Anglo-Saxon England or post-Roman Gaul, especially in respect to more recent studies of relations between mortuary customs and the construction of social and personal identities. These chapters will look into the evidence from the Dalmatian cities and cemeteries, as well as the language-shift and influences from the Pannonian-based Avar qaganate. It will emphasise the existence of different models of acculturation in different regions of Dalmatia, which produced different ways of identity-construction that resulted ultimately in an internal change of identity, but also with the external perception of the population who 'became Slavs' in this period. The chapters also deal with the intertwining of structures of power between the indigenous population and the 'Slav' arrivals, as well as the extreme political fragmentation which started to rebuild from the bottom up, through kin-based units, regions and which finally resulted in the establishment of more complex political institutions in Dalmatia, such as the Croat duchy and the later Croat kingdom.

Chapter 8: The 9th century: Chroati ex machina

This chapter will deal with the appearance of Croat identity in Dalmatia in the 9th century. It will place formation of the earliest Croat identity in the context of regional political and social transformation. It will also link this new identity with major political events of the period, such as the expansion of the ideologically charged western Christianity and the interaction of regional political structures with more complex contemporary political institutions, such as the Carolingian Empire and the recovered Byzantine Empire, which encouraged the appearance of new political identities and new ideological discourses. These global changes enabled the population to 'become Croats', to accept the identity of the elite from the Ravni Kotari region and to construct a new identity, which unified the existing identities of the arrivals and the indigenous population.

Conclusion

The most important conclusion is that there were two separate processes. The first was the process of acculturation, 'becoming Slavs', which

resulted in the transformation of the cultural *habitus* that was perceived by outside observers as ‘Slav’, but in fact hid a heterogeneous patchwork of overlapping identities. Thus, we can see ‘becoming Slavs’ as an extremely complex process of transformation of cultural *habitus* in specific political circumstances, which separated Illyricum from the Mediterranean and repositioned it towards the continent, yet still on the periphery of Avar influence. Extreme political fragmentation and the absence of political forces in the neighbourhood did not require the development of political entities that would produce new identities – the population of post-Roman Dalmatia had no reason to construct and better define their identities before the 9th century. Another process was the development of complex political entities, ‘becoming Croats’, which in changed political circumstances, after the disintegration of the Avar qaganate, the foundation of *thema* Dalmatia and the building of the Carolingian Empire, caused a formation of political institutions. New identities developed in the cultural *habitus* of the region, known to outside observers as the ‘Sclavinias’.

1. CROAT ORIGINS IN THE CROATIAN IMAGINATION

The significance of Slav migrations for the development of South Slav national discourses

Ethnicity is an important tool for the self-definition of social groups. True, ethnicities in the present and past are 'imagined communities', they are subjective, contextual and transform perpetually. However, modern ethnicities, nations and nationalisms are not constructed out of nothing; they were not simply a 'toxic waste' as Geary, for example, observed in more recent times, in relation to early medieval identities.¹ Understanding the role and significance of ethnic identities in Southeastern Europe requires us to see them in their historical and political contexts, or else we are in danger of falling into Orientalising, or even more properly defined 'Balkanising', discourse, which describes all inhabitants of the 'Balkans' as a specific kind of 'transitional Other', between the West and the 'Orient'. Attempts to apply frameworks which fit Western European historical development, cultural, political and social values on Southeastern and Eastern Europe are failing to give more insightful picture of the past. Southeastern European identities cannot be observed through western cultural values, as they challenge both systems of constructed values, 'Western' and 'Oriental', existing in the third space in-between them; marginalised and defined through the Western colonial discourse as the 'Balkans'.²

Eastern and Southeastern Europe survived difficult and traumatic times during the 1990s, and the disintegration of the communist bloc caused a rethinking, restructuring and reinvention of ethnicities in the region. The postmodern era signalled the end of the modernistic 'multiethnic' state-constructs, such as Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. They either disintegrated, or in the case of present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina, a dysfunctional, essentially stillborn state was constructed by the Western-imposed Dayton peace accord of 1995, after three years of armed conflict. The rise of ethnicities and

¹ See the well placed criticism of Hutchinson 2004; 2005.

² See esp. Fleming 2000, but also Blažević 2007b: 87–94.

their prominence does not affect only the former Eastern Europe, Western Europe is also increasingly aware of its minorities, especially the newly constructed identities of migrant groups and the first generation of migrants who rejected assimilation into their host's cultural and identity patterns, and choose to live in-between cultural templates of their birth-country and the imagined diasporic interpretation of parental culture.³

The construction of ethnicities, known today as the South Slavs, is strongly based upon the interpretations and perceptions of the past; the Croatian sense of identity is no different in that regard. The imaginary constructs of the past are transformed into realities of the present, influencing the ways in which modern ethnicities in the region relate to themselves and perceive others around them. While acknowledging this important and essentially positive fact which distinguishes the construction of the most Eastern and Southeastern European ethnicities from the construction of some, especially non-European based, western identities (United States, Canada, Australia), it should be said that these views of the past are easily manipulated in the present, and that the present has too frequently determined the way in which the past has been seen. Subjective interpretations of history are frequently used to justify present pretensions towards the space used by the 'Other', or for assimilating the identities of the 'Other'.⁴ The same identity-label in different situation is having different meaning. For example, today the label 'Bosnian' for Croatians from Bosnia and Herzegovina would be perceived as neutral and descriptive, implying regional identity, when used by the other Croatians. However, the ethnic label 'Bosnian' or 'Bosnian-Catholic', attached to self-defined Croatians from Bosnia and Herzegovina by Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) or Bosnian nationalists, would be perceived as offensive, as it implies forceful assimilation and the denial of group identity. A similar perception of identities, according to the situation, appears amongst other identities in that region. The positivist view of history and peoples as unchangeable units is indeed something nationalists might draw upon to justify their pretensions on space, or claim to be threatened by their neighbours. The interpretation of the past was used in political purposes legitimating the needs of the present, and continues

³ E.g. Tribalat 1995; Baumann 1996; Pauly 2004 etc.

⁴ See Madgeary 2008.

to be used until today in popular and political discourses developed in the wider region.⁵

The problem of Croat origins is even more open for different manipulations, taking into account the Slavic characteristics of medieval Croats, such as personal names or language, and the suspiciously non-Slavic ethnonym *Hrvat*, pl. *Hrvati* (Croat, Croats), which was at one time or another recognised in scholarship as Sarmatian, Persian, Turkic, Gothic, etc. This chapter will explore the ways in which Croat origins have been seen throughout history, as well as the current popular views of Croat origins. Certainly, this is a very broad topic, and the purpose will be to underline the most important and prevailing discourses.⁶

The discourses on Croat origins

The discourses on Croat origins, as much as the discourses on the origins of other South Slavs, started to appear in chapters 29–31 of the *De Administrando Imperio*, written in the mid-10th century by the Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, and resurfaced in the 12th or 13th centuries, when the Presbyter Diocleas and Thomas the Archdeacon of Spalatum tried to explain the appearance of Slavic identities in the region. This problem, thanks to insufficient sources, tickled the imagination of Croatian and other intellectuals throughout the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, up to the present day. There are several discourses, ‘schools of thought’, or ‘models’, which sometimes reflect the times in which they developed and the political ideals of those scholars who contributed to these discourses, rather than providing an accurate scholarly assessment of the past. We can divide these discourses on origins as ‘migrationist’, observing Croats as arrivals in post-Roman Illyricum, whether as Slavs, Goths, Iranians, or Turks, and the ‘autochthonist’, which viewed them as indigenous.⁷

The ‘autochthon Slav’ discourse derived from Renaissance times, which linked early modern Slav identities with the ancient construction of Illyricum, as well as the ancient perception of the indigenous

⁵ Kaiser 1995; Novaković 2007; Madgearu 2008: 195–200.

⁶ See for more in depth analysis, Katičić 1999a; 1999b; Budak 2009b, and in a wider comparative context of non-Slav discourses of origins amongs South Slavs see recently Brunnbauer 2006.

⁷ The migrationist discourses can also be divided into ‘Slav’ and ‘anti-Slav’, as in Katičić 1999a: 155 ff.

population as 'Illyrians'. It developed amongst the 'textual communities' of the humanist Croat elite in the Dalmatian cities of the late 14th to early 15th centuries, to be embraced by humanist and early modern writers, such as Vinko Pribojević, Matija Petar Katančić, and even Mauro Orbini and Pavao Ritter Vitezović. The discourse gained particular popularity within the 'Illyrian' national movement and its leader Ljudevit Gaj in the early 19th century in Croatia, and was also supported by the historian Tadija Smičiklas, from the second part of that century. This discursive construct imagined Croats and South Slavs as being indigenous to Illyricum, and saw the Slav migrations bringing Slavic language in the region, or saw migrations as the arrival of the northern Slavic brethren, as did Orbini. It tried to articulate Croat and South Slav claims on the past through the construction of continuity with antiquity. This discourse lost its scholarly relevance when linguistics showed that the indigenous population of Illyricum did not speak a Slavic language.⁸ In certain aspects, this model was resurrected in recent times, not only in Croatia, but in neighbouring countries as well, as part of post-Yugoslav identity-construction processes, which in most cases has nothing to do with history (below pp. 22–3).

'Slavic' discourse emphasized migrations as the reason for the transformation of identities; with variations this currently dominates popular imagination and scholarly views on the appearances of Croat and other South Slav identities in post-Roman Illyricum. Drawing evidence from the narrative of Constantine VII and chapters 29 to 36 of his DAI, this discourse achieved prominence, helped by a strong political impetus from panslavic and yugoslavist political ideology of the 19th century. It imagined the Croats as "*an integral part of the amorphous Slav ethnicum*" which spread through the Balkan Peninsula in the 7th century.⁹ The idea that Croats and other South Slavs migrated into Illyricum as a single group inside an essentially single 'nation' or 'race' has been present from the renaissance and early humanistic times in Poland and Bohemia,¹⁰ in particular in the 15th and 16th century

⁸ Blažević 2007a; 2007b; Ančić 2005b: 127–36; Kuntić-Makvić 1984; Antoljak 1992b: 1.17–88; Katičić 1999a: 164, see also Pantić 1969 (Orbini); Kuntić-Makvić 1995 (Vitezović). On Illyrian movement views in history, see Antoljak 1992b: 1.379–424.

⁹ Katičić 1999a: 156, 159, quote from 159.

¹⁰ The idea that the 'Slavs' came from Poland in Illyricum is older. It derives from the tradition recorded in the early 12th century by the Polish chronicler Gallus Anonymus, who was probably used in Thomas the Archdeacon's narrative of the fall of Salona, HS 7(34–8); Živković 2009b: 109, see below, pp. 101–4.

works of Ioannes Dlugossus, Mathias Miechoviensis or Venceslaus Hagecus, all of which were used by Martinus Cromerus (Martin of Kroměř) in his capital work *De origine et rebus gestis Polonorum*, printed in the integral version in 1589. The most influential work using this idea would probably be *De Regno Dalmatiae et Slavoniae*, by Johannes Lucius (Ivan Lučich or Lučić, 1604–1679) of Trogir. Lucius broke with the tradition of autochtonists such as Orbini or Pribojević, but also challenged the prevalent scholarly opinion of the 15th and 16th century Italian scholars Blondus, Sabellicus and Baronius that the Slavs settled in Dalmatia in the reign of Maurice or Phoca, moving the date to the reign of the Eastern Roman emperor Heraclius.¹¹ The most significant scholarly contributors to this discourse, continuing the ideas of Lucius, were the Croatian historian Franjo Rački (1828–1894), and the linguist Vatroslav Jagić (1838–1923).¹²

The idea of a joint arrival of Croats and Serbs into post-Roman Illyricum suited the proponents of ideological yugoslavism and panslavism in the intellectual and political circle which formed around the archbishop of Đakovo, Bosnia and Syrmia (Srijem), Josip Juraj (Georg) Strossmayer (1815–1905), such as Rački or Jagić. This circle supported a loosely defined political program which focused on the union of all Southern Slavs, the separation of Croats from the Habsburg Austro-Hungarian Empire and their unification with Serbia.¹³ The impact of Rački, in particular, on the future historiography of the early medieval Croats was immense and long lasting, because he, as a true master-architect, placed the existing blocks of 'knowledge' from Lucius onwards, into an ideologically consistent historical narrative of the South Slavs, changing Lucius' original exclusive historiographical interest in the Croats.¹⁴ His view of the arriving Slavs settling

¹¹ Lucius, *De Regno* 1.9.171–80 (settlement of the Slavs). Although familiar with the works of the Polish and Bohemian scholars through Cromerus (*De Regno*, 1.11.80–1), Lucius did not view the Croats fully as migrants from the north, but left open the possibility that they were ancient inhabitants of Moesia, Lucius, *De Regno* 1.11.101–8. See Antoljak 1992b: 1.124–67; Kurelac 1994 on Lucius in general, and Kuntić-Makvić 1985 on Lucius' perceptions of the Slav arrival.

¹² Gross 2004; Antoljak 1992b: 2.88–157 (Rački). It is interesting to note that Rački wrote the first comprehensive study of Lucius, Rački 1879.

¹³ See the recent study of relations between Rački and Strossmayer in Strčić 2006.

¹⁴ Lucius excluded the Serbs from the earliest history of the Croats (e.g. *De Regno* 1.11.125–30; 1.12.9–11) and viewed them, following Cromerus, as the arrivals who together with the Bulgars came from Asian Sarmatia and pushed the Croats from Moesia into Croatia and Bosnia, Lucius, *De Regno* 1.11.81–4; 1.11.101–8.

the empty house haunted Croatian historiography for more than a century after his death: “*Here the new inhabitants (Slavs=Croats and Serbs) found, so to say, already made house, almost fully or partly empty, and all they needed to do was to inhabit it.*”¹⁵ In 1877 Rački edited the collection of primary sources for Croatian history, *Documenta historiae Chroaticae periodum antiquam illustrantia*, which had a dominant impact on future scholars and developed a framework for the narrative construct of the earliest Croatian history. Only quite recently Ančić opened the way to challenge this discursive framework, by delicately deconstructing the work of Rački. He showed how Rački’s view on early Croat history perfectly functioned inside the contemporary intellectual milieu. The work of Rački was an attempt to lay the blueprints for narrative social biography of the Croats as a part of the larger historical metanarrative, which constructed the joint history for the South Slavs.¹⁶ Rački did not live to see the unification of the South Slav lands into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (after 1929 Kingdom of Yugoslavia) on the 1st December of 1918, but his historical framework was perfectly suited for the new state construction. After Ferdinand (Ferdo) Šišić incorporated ideas of Rački in his masterpiece *History of the Croats in the Age of the Croat Rulers* (Šišić 1925), which would become the foundation stone for later historiography, the ‘Slav discourse’ became reified scholarly ‘knowledge’ for generations to come.

‘Croat-Slavic’ discourse (the model of ‘Croatian Slavism’ as referred to by Katičić)¹⁷ was developed from the earlier mentioned ‘Slavic’ discourse, which showed the Croats as a distinctive Slav group that migrated into post-Roman Illyricum. It emphasised the separate nature of Croat identity and explained the arrival of Croats as a double migration; the initial settlement of the Slavs, followed by a second settlement of the Croats. It also corresponded with the so called ‘wedge’ theory which was initiated by the Slovak panslavist Šafárik, who saw Croats and Serbs as dominant peoples over other southern Slavs who, as a wedge, separated Slovenians from Bulgarians.¹⁸ It was accepted in the

¹⁵ “*Ovdje su novi žitelji našli tako rekav gotovu kuću, ali podpuno ili dielomice praznu, te ju samo zapremiti trebalo.*” Rački [1879/93] 2008: 94. The essential works of Rački related to the Croat medieval history are collected in Rački [1879/93] 2008.

¹⁶ Ančić 2008b.

¹⁷ Katičić 1999a: 159.

¹⁸ Šafárik 1837: 254–65, 406–12.

19th century by Vjekoslav Klaić the Croatian historian, Jernej Kopitar and Franc Miklošič the Slovenian linguists, and the German historian Ernst Dümmler. We might even say that in essence the view which separated the arrival of the Slav Croats from the other Slavs remained prominent in Communist times, as it reflected Croatian sameness and separateness from other South Slavs. This was encouraged by Tito's 'brotherhood-and-unity' ideology of the Yugoslav socialist federation as a commonwealth of 'brotherly' South Slavs, different peoples but of the same 'kin', after 1945.

The 'Gothic' theory derived from the medieval stereotypical identification of all migrant groups in Late Antiquity with the Goths, and was preserved in the *Libellus Gothorum* and the *HS* of Thomas, the Archdeacon of Spalatum, discussed in more detail in chapter 5. The most important scholar who attempted to argue that the Croats derived from the Goths was the Croatian Kerubin Šegvić, executed in 1945 by Tito's communists for his anti-Yugoslav and anti-communist political activities, but even more for his theories about the Gothic origins of the Croats.¹⁹ This theory can be assessed and better understood in its contemporary political context, as an intellectual attempt to distance Croats from Serbs, to re-assert Croatian identity and to fight for political rights in the Serb-dominated kingdom of Yugoslavia, especially after the dissolution of democracy and the establishment of the royal dictatorship in 1929. The claims that the government of the Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*–NDH 1941–1945), the quisling state supported by Nazi Germany, tried to suppress the notion of 'Slavic' origins of Croats has been shown to be unsubstantiated. While open and friendly towards possibilities of Gothic origins of the Croats, the government did not deny the notion of Slavic origins and the character of medieval Croats in official textbooks and publications.²⁰

The 'Iranian' theory became more popular after the discovery of two fragmentary Greek language public inscriptions from Tanais on the Black Sea, dated to AD 175–211 and 220. They mentioned two names: Horoathos twice and Horouathos, which were regarded by linguists as

¹⁹ Šegvić 1936. The 'Gothic' theory was revived and modernised by Mužić 2002, but this view is difficult to maintain with success, due to the very fluent nature of Gothic identity. See Madgearu 2008: 156–7.

²⁰ Jareb 2008, see also Bartulin 2006: 246–51 on the Croatian government's use of Gothic theory in strengthening Nazi tutelage.

being of Persian origins; after the Russian philologist Pogodin first took notice of it.²¹ Scholarship in communist Yugoslavia was rooted in 'Slavic' or 'Croat-Slavic' discourses and mostly avoided discussing these inscriptions after 1945, as 'politically incorrect', or misinterpreted them;²² but in the earlier Anglophone scholarship the idea remained popular.²³ This theory in its literal application has been duly rejected by serious scholarship, although the notion that the Croats had an Iranian 'ethnogenetic component', or some very remote Iranian or Sarmatian influences, like the etymology or the origin of ethnonym 'Croats', is still occasionally present in some form.²⁴ In reality, it is difficult, if not impossible, to connect the three personal names of the city magistrates in Tanais from the 3rd century AD with the construction of their identity, to reconstruct their sense of belonging without more evidence, or to link their identity with the construction of identity of the people who called themselves Croats in 9th century Dalmatia. The same relates to the link of personal names from Tanais and the Croat group name. The poststructuralist view of group identity as unstable and perpetually changing seriously damages any notion of an 'Iranian component' in the construction of early medieval Croat identity.

In the 1970s and 1980s a new discourse was developed on Croat origins in scholarship, we might call it 'early medieval'. In essence, 'early medieval' discourse linked the Croat appearance in Dalmatia with the end of the Avar qaganate and the Frankish expansion in Central Europe in the late 8th to early 9th centuries, rather than with the Slav migrations of the 6th and 7th centuries. Croatian historians Margetić and later Nada Klaić postulated that the Croat migration in Dalmatia occurred in the late 8th century.²⁵ At the same time the linguist Kronsteiner speculated that the group ethnonym 'Croats' might have had a remote Turkic-Avar etymology.²⁶ Kronsteiner's basic ideas were developed later by Walter Pohl into a more coherent view of Croat identity as a primarily social, elite identity that developed

²¹ IRB 430, 445 (=CIRB 1245, 1277).

²² Katičić 1999a: 160–3; Škegro 2005b, see also Koščak 1995.

²³ Especially Dvornik 1956: 277–97; see also Fine 1983: 57–9, both followed and elaborated upon the ideas of Sakač 1949.

²⁴ Fine 2000: 208–9; 2006: 26; Koščak 1995: 113–6; Katičić 1998: 225–6; 1999a: 160; Škegro 2002; 2005b: 27, even Budak 1994: 11–12.

²⁵ Margetić 1977; Klaić 1984 – both discussed in more length in Chapter 2.

²⁶ Kronsteiner 1978: 146–9, criticized by Tietze 1979.

amongst the warrior-groups inside the Avar qaganate, who imposed themselves as leaders of the Slavic groups in Dalmatia after the end of the qaganate.²⁷

The 'Turkish theory' that argued that Croats had Turkish origins, is quite a recent idea, compared to earlier discourses on Croat origins. Unaware of the earlier views on Turkic-Avar etymology of the group ethnonym 'Croats', a recent book by Turkish author Karatay uses inadequate evidence to prove the point that the Croats were a slavified Turkic 'tribe'. He frequently disregarded the corpus of existing historiographical scholarship on the subject, so this view cannot be taken seriously. It is interesting to see that the same author also viewed the origins of the Bosniaks as Turkic, and the dynasty of Kotromanić, which ruled medieval Bosnian polity, as having Turkic origins. This approach might be interpreted as an application of Ottoman colonial views in quasi-postmodern dress, and the popularisation of historical links between Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey, rather than serious scholarly research into the origins of the Croats or Bosniaks, as group identities.²⁸

The popularity of non-Slavic theories of Croat origins in more recent Croatian popular discourse, especially the great commercial success of Ivan Mužić and his books on the autochthonous and Gothic origins of the Croats, which achieved record sales for a fairly limited, mainly Croatian market in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.²⁹ The success of the 'Iranian theory' culminated in the recent placement of a plaster copy of the tables from Tanais in the atrium of the *Matica Hrvatska* (one of the oldest Croatian cultural institutions) palace in Zagreb in the 1990s.³⁰ This success of non-Slavic theories of Croat origins in popular perceptions corresponded with the volatile 1980s and 1990s, when the Croatian identity of the last generation was formed in opposition to the Serbs and Yugoslavia. These views played an important role in building popular Croatianness and the construction of 'Others' in that

²⁷ Pohl 1985; Budak 1990 – more details in Chapter 2.

²⁸ Karatay 2003: 1–96 (Croats), 111–42 (Bosniaks). See the extremely polite but firm criticism in Margetić 2001b.

²⁹ 7,000 copies of the first edition of Mužić 2001 were sold for sixteen months in 1989, according to the author, Mužić 2002: 12. Thus far, the book has been published in seven editions.

³⁰ Škegro 2005b: 9. This theory was openly embraced by some Croatian politicians in the 1990s, including the late president Tuđman, see Novaković 2007: 184–5; Madgearu 2008: 157–9.

period.³¹ However, no author, apart from most of Mužić's work, could be taken seriously.³² The most recent genetic research into 'Croatian genetics' and the 'counting of Croatian genes' also contributes to these non-Slavic discourses in popular perception.³³ Croats are not the only ones in the region who have attempted to shift their popular identity-discourse from Slavic to non-Slavic in recent times. Good examples are some recent views of the 'prehistorical indigenes' of the Bosniaks in Bosnia and Herzegovina,³⁴ or the theory of ancient Venetian origins of the Slovenians.³⁵

In the end, it is important to be aware that these discourses on origins played a significant role in the intellectual construction of post-medieval Croat and modern Croatian identities. In later medieval times, the Croats used a 'Slavic identity-code' in order to distinguish themselves from the Germans and Hungarians; thus the 'Slav discourse' was constructed through the works of Croat humanists. Only in the very early modern era did the 'Slavic identity-code' start to be replaced by the 'Croat code'.³⁶ The ideologies of panslavism and yugoslavism enabled Croats to maintain their Slav and South Slavic identity, while anti-Yugoslav feelings and the way of distinguishing

³¹ Heršak and Nikšić 2007: 262, defending on highly speculative grounds, some aspects of the 'Iranian theory' 262–4.

³² For Mužić, see pp. 46–7, amongst other works: Bauer et al. 1994; Pantelić 2002.

³³ For genetics, see p. 54. It is worrying that the 'counting of Croatian genes', as much scholarly as it is in the domain of natural science, engages the popular imagination of Croat origins. For example in the English Wikipedia entry s.v. Croats <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Croats> (last time assessed 15/05/2010) as much space is dedicated to genetic research as to the historiography of Croat origins. See the well-balanced and witty, but still lonely criticism of Aralica 2006, which exposed the dangers of these approaches.

³⁴ These views were rightly criticised by mainstream scholarship as scholarly irrelevant, so there is no need to repeat these criticisms, see Škegro 2007c; Novaković 2007: 185, or Periša 2008. The tragicomical popular and media frenzy about the 'pyramids' in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2006 and 2007, induced by the Bosniak-born amateur archaeologist living in the United States, who saw the inhabitants of Bosnia as descendants of a 27,000 old hyper-advanced culture of pyramid-builders. Unfortunately, the amateurishly conducted and fruitless 'excavations' in the vicinity of medieval structures on the Visočica hill near the town of Visoko, are still allowed by the Bosniak-majority municipal government. The sociological studies of this phenomenon are more appropriate, and no need for serious scholarly debate exists, see Bohannon 2006.

³⁵ Guštin 1990 provides sufficient scholarly criticism of the idea of Venetian origins of the Slovenians; see more recently Bratož 2005 or Novaković 2007: 183–4.

³⁶ Cipek 2000: 59–70. See also the equally engaging argument of Blažević 2007a, analysing the parallel intellectual construct of Illyrism, finishing with nationalisation (Croatisation) of the Illyrian ideologies in the early 18th century.

and preserving Croatian identity inside the Yugoslav state-construction, in particular from Serb dominance, gave strength to anti-Slav discourses, such as Gothic and Iranian.

The migrations of the Croats in art and popular culture

Like other Southeastern and Central European ethnicities, modern Croatian ethnicity has been significantly impacted by sense of historical continuity in the space that the Croats inhabited.³⁷ It is very obvious in public identity-discourse. The notion of the ‘Thousand years old dream’ of independence by the late Croatian president and historian Franjo Tuđman had a strong impact on redefining Croatian identity in the times of the post-Yugoslav conflict. The links which bind Croatian identity with the past are part of everyday life in Croatia and amongst Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which are frequently reflected in public spaces. Streets are named after popular medieval rulers of Croatia;³⁸ there are numerous monuments devoted to the rulers of medieval Croatia such as a statue of Duke Branimir in Nin, or equestrian statue of King Tomislav across the road from the main train station in Zagreb; the township of Duvno in Herzegovina was renamed Tomislavgrad (the city of Tomislav),³⁹ after the fall of the communist government in 1990; and so on. It is interesting to note, however, that the emphasis lay much more on the representation of the Croat medieval statehood and its symbols/rulers in public spaces, rather than on the Croat migration and arrival, which is the opposite of some other countries, such as Hungary for example, where the arrival is far more emphasised in public spaces.⁴⁰

The popular discourse and popular perceptions of Croat migration in ‘the promised land’ from a ‘faraway homeland’ are reflected throughout more recent Croatian art, but it is curious that they are not as numerous as might be expected. Especially interesting and representative are the paintings by the Croatian painters Josip Franjo Mücke

³⁷ See also Budak 2009b.

³⁸ The use of medieval rulers for the names of streets in Croatian cities is a prime example of selective historical memory, see Grgin 2007.

³⁹ Originally named Tomislavgrad 1925, after the decree of king Alexander I Karađorđević honouring the millenary celebrations of the Tomislav coronation, renamed by Communist government Duvno after the Second World War, and again renamed Tomislavgrad after the fall of communism.

⁴⁰ I would like to thank Dr Trpimir Vedriš on this sharp observation.

(1819–1883), Ferdinand (Ferdo) Quiquerez (1845–1893), Oton Iveković (1869–1939), and Mate Celestin Medović (1857–1920) which all depict the arrival of the Croats. The earliest was Mücke's painting from 1867, one in a series of his historical paintings depicting Croatian history and emphasising pan-Slav unity, such as *The Alliance of the Ljudevit (Liudewitus) of Pannonia with the Slovenians*, from the same year. *The Arrival of the Croats in Croatia*, which shows the mythological figures of five brothers and two sisters from the Croat *origo gentis* which is preserved in Chapter 30 of the DAI, with an army, encamped in the background observing the idyllic and uninhabited continental landscape.

After Mücke, the representation of the Croat arrival in painting changes iconography, focusing on the Croat arrival at the sea. The popularity of the motif of the arrival of the Croats at the (Adriatic) sea was particularly clear in the contemporary 19th and early 20th century Croatian political context. The establishment of the personal union and the 1868 division of the Austro-Hungarian Empire into the Austrian Empire and Hungarian kingdom, under a joint government and the ruler from the house of Habsburg, separated the Croats between these two. Thus, the Croats in continental Croatia, which was part of the Hungarian kingdom, (without success) demanded from the imperial government to be joined with the Croats in Dalmatia, under the same administration. Mücke's student Quiquerez, in his *Arrival of the Croats at the Sea* from 1870, implanted this political message and depicted the brothers and sisters as almost semi-divine creatures from Graeco-Roman mythology, standing on rocks whipped by bubbling white waves.

The motif of the arrival of the Croats at the (Adriatic) Sea was repeated by Iveković (*Arrival of the Croats at the Adriatic sea* from 1905, Picture 1) and Medović (*Arrival of the Croats* from 1903, Picture 2) renowned Croatian painters from the period of early Modern art, both fond of historical topics in their work. In essence, both paintings showed the arrival of the chosen people to the Promised Land. The highly raised swords of the horsemen, the view of the new land and the dawn rising over the Adriatic Sea were symbols which dominated both paintings. There were some differences too, for example Medović's image was quite dramatic, and represented the ecstatic Croats wildly rejoicing in the early dawn, kissing the ground with the 'barbaric' half-naked Hun-like appearance of their shaven heads. Medović's Croats were warriors rather than settlers, as the absence of



Picture 1: Oton Iveković, *Dolazak Hrvata na Jadran* (Arrival of the Croats at the Adriatic Sea, 1905).

women and children from the painting clearly shows and they were ready to follow the raised sword of their leader. In sharp contrast to Medović, Iveković showed the Croats in a more civilised and self-controlled manner, more as a settlers than warriors. With dawn already established, the five brothers argued in sight of the Adriatic as to whether to go further; the people are curious rather than ecstatic and women and small children are present; everyone is ready to settle and populate desolate lands, but also ready to fight if necessary.

In literature, the motif of the Croat arrival was sparsely used. The writer and politician Ljubomir Tito Babić, better known under his literary alias, Ksaver Šandor Gjalski (1854–1935), devoted his short novel, the *Arrival of the Croats*, to millenary celebrations of the apparent coronation of Tomislav, as the first Croat king in 1925.⁴¹ It was a

⁴¹ It is interesting to note that Šišić's monumental work on Croat history (Šišić 1925), or the study of R. Horvat on king Tomislav, also correspond with this commemoration. The celebration occurred in the atmosphere of the boiling Serbo-Croatian political conflict. The Serb-dominated royal government in Belgrade after brief deliberation, allowed this commemoration, changed the name of Duvno into Tomislavgrad and even issued postage stamps in 1929, juxtaposing the images of king Alexander I Karađorđević with king Tomislav, and appropriating Tomislav for use in royal Yugoslav political ideology.



Picture 2: Celestin Mato Medović, *Dolazak Hrvata* (Arrival of the Croats, 1903). Croatian Institute for History, Zagreb.

national-romanticist novel, which recombined stories told in the DAI and HS, but also drew upon visual motives by classical authors, such as Xenophon. The plot follows the narration of chapter 30 of the DAI, where the 'evil' Avars destroyed Salona and the Croats came to avenge

this with the support of the Byzantines. Gjalski described a 'cousin' relationship with the Goths, after the HS of Thomas the Archdeacon, thus legitimising the Croat entitlement to land once ruled by the Ostrogoths. The animosity towards the Germans and Avars is visible, and should be ascribed to contemporary animosities towards the Germans and Hungarians. The indigenous population, visible in the events leading up to the fall of Salona, quietly disappeared from the novel to give way to the Croats. It is also worthy to mention the novel *The Arrival of the Croats* from 1908 by Milutin Mayer (1874–1958), a writer of historical-patriotic novels, and the play, the *Arrival of the Croats* from 1907 by the Croatian actress, translator and playwright, Nina Vavra (1879–1942).

The migration discourse is also alive in pop-culture. The best examples are the works of the painter and comic-book author Andrija Maurović (1901–1981). In his series of comic books on the screenplay by Stanko Radovanović, alias S. R. Žrnovački, entitled the *Great Migration of the Croats*, soon to be renamed *Count Radoslav*. Critically highly acclaimed, it was first printed in 1943/1944 and unfortunately proscribed by the Yugoslav communist regime in the later period (although Maurović himself was anti-fascist), so it waited for its next reprint for almost half a century. It showed the adventures of the Croat count Radoslav and his people, who around AD 600 went on the search for a new country, mostly in order to make beautiful Sunčica fall in love with the brave Radoslav. In more recent times the comic books of Boris Talijančić (1951–), in his series *Borna*, exploit similar grounds to Maurović, describing the adventures of the Croat warrior Borna, who accidentally killed Kayan, the son of the Avar qagan and must hide from the vengeful Avars. They both depict the transition of the initially 'barbarian' heroes to civilisation, in the search for the Promised Land.⁴²

Croatian pop music before the 1990s did not use the motif of Croat migrations for several reasons. One is the obvious fear of being perceived as nationalistic and excluded from the wider Yugoslav markets, not to mention the ever present threat of censorship and persecution. The motif was only recently used by the popular pop singer Marko Perković, aka Thompson, often accused of being an extremely right-wing nationalist by his (left-wing) opponents, for evoking the iconography of the Nazi-puppet Independent State of Croatia, and defended

⁴² Krulčić and Neugebauer 1990; Matošević 2004/05.

as an anti-communist patriot and a person of high moral standing for his charity work, by his supporters. He had a significant audience in Croatia, amongst Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the diasporic Croatian communities in the West. Thompson touched upon the motif of Croat migrations in his song *Dolazak Hrvata* (*The Arrival of the Croats*) on his LP *Once Upon a Time in Croatia*, in 2006. His verses masterfully reflect the most recent common denominators of the popular perception of Croatian identity and the importance of the past in the construction and reconstruction of that identity: *In heroic land, sweet, beautiful and faraway, in Anno Domini six hundred and something/Came upon that land force/Blue blood was leading the people/The ground trembles, the stone breaks apart/Through heavenly doors/Rode white knight/With a golden sword/Give me piece of sacred land/Land is Mother and a Child*. They place together the Croatian notions of the arrival, with the notions of autochthony, the chosen people, the relationship with the land and the past and Catholic Christian identity, communicating it to his audience with great success.⁴³

The migrationist discourse is full of powerful and emotionally charged imagery; it is no surprise that it was so widely accepted as a popular discourse, apart from different ideological reasons. It easily initiates a strong sense of empathy and identification with the fictional imagery of the noble and powerful Slavs/Croats who came to 'claim back the land'. It is interesting to note that a few passages from the *Arrival of the Croats* by Gjalski, especially his audial imaging of the Croat arrival at the sea, reminds the reader strongly of the shouts by Xenophon's 10,000 Greek mercenaries who, not unlike the Croats of Gjalski, cried "*Thalassa, Thalassa*" (Sea, Sea) after finally reaching the coast in the *Anabasis*. This reflects more the images of the wild, rejoicing warriors from Medović's painting, than of Iveković's migrants.

Thick forests made only of oaks and beeches covered those mountain peaks, while needle-thin pines and huge sky-touching spruces, and gigantic silver firs began slowly to disappear. Instead of their spiky rough greenery they looked into long soft leaves on thick branches of immense trees, whose dense and wavy branches swaying down and made cool and refreshing shade under their large green leaves. They even encountered their dear Slav linden-trees everywhere in those forests, and they felt as they see and hear whisper and talk of their own enchanting creatures called Vilas, and Slav gods from Perun's and Sventovid's divine forests!

⁴³ On Thompson, see Falski 2005.

They came to the high peak, where they wondered how the ground was all covered with greenery and tall flowers of Butcher's brooms, medicinal herb they knew well as warriors and fighters. Rejoicing, they watched that greenery thinking that their gods will be protecting them in the incoming war, by giving them such a precious gift. So they called beautiful hill Veprinac,⁴⁴ and all women, young and all, started hurriedly to pick and storage tall flowers and broad leaves from the ground.

And then, from hundreds, from thousands of mouths came merry, glorious, celebratory shout: "Sea – sea – here is the sea, down here!"

Incomparable rejoicing was shaking souls and hearts of whole innumerable group of the arrivals, and their greeting to the sea was lasting hours and hours.

Ksaver Šandor Gjalski, *The Arrival of the Croats*, transl. Dzino

Thus, in this brief overview, we have shown that the perceptions of the Croat arrival were used within their own times, either to underline the panslavic or South-Slavic 'brotherhood' against the 'Others' (Germans, Italians, Hungarians), or to distinguish the Croatians from the other Slavs, in particular the Serbs. The discourse on Croat autochthony after its popularity in humanism and early modern times, and the romantic era Illyrian movement, was resurrected only recently, in the period of redefining Croatian identity during the demise of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. It is not alone, as the 'autochthonist' claims on the past are also dominant in other post-Yugoslav peoples, such as the Slovenians or Bosniaks.

The migrationist discourses on the Croat arrival strongly influenced popular perception and imagination, as well as scholarly thought, in the last and present century. The building blocks of knowledge are around the assumption that the Croats arrived in Dalmatia as part of the larger 'Slav' migrations in the 6th and 7th centuries. All dominant ideologies in the past, whether panslavism, yugoslavism, or anti-Yugoslav feelings, and also the powerful imagery of the arriving Croats as the chosen people taking their land, were influential in forming a popular perception of the past and the 'knowledge' of how the Croats arrived in Dalmatia. The popularity of this 'knowledge' was such that scholarly thought was opposed to the idea to take more notice of the destiny of the indigenous pre-Slavic population, and to rethink the explanatory models for the appearance of 'Slav' identities in early

⁴⁴ *Veprinac* comes from *Veprina* = Croatian for Butcher's broom.

medieval times outside of the migrationist model. The end of the unified Yugoslav political space in 1991 opened the possibility of new, more insightful perspectives to the historiography of early medieval Dalmatia and the medieval Croat polity, unbound by political and ideological frameworks of earlier times.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ See Ančić 2001b: 306–7.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND THE SCHOLARSHIP

Postmodernism, identity, history

The postmodern interpretation of history is slowly becoming the foundation stone of the wider scholarly consensus in the research of past societies. Therefore, it is important to briefly restate the core elements of their methodological frameworks. In short, the new interpretations, also known as postmodern, and in a narrower sense, poststructuralist, have tried to recognise and dismantle the layers and structures of the existing discourses and metanarratives (political, cultural, ideological, etc.) that have impacted on the earlier historical interpretation and view of the past. Its most significant feature is that all the sources must be re-examined, focusing on the context in which they were created. The remains of material culture should be interpreted through the social contexts in which they existed, and the written sources are seen not only as sources that reported events from the past, but also as personal narratives, products of the cultural and political discourses of their times, as literary works that followed the conventions of their genre, and sometimes reflect the discursive/political/cultural background of the author and his cultural stereotypes rather than historical 'truth', or fragments of the historical 'truth'.

*"General studies of individual historians tend to emphasize the 'construction' that the historian engages in while narrating his version of the past rather than on the past reality that the history is supposed to represent: in other words, Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War is studied for what it tells us of the author's own view of the conflict, and of the preconceptions shared by him and his audience, rather than for what it tells us of the actual historical circumstances of the years 431 to 411: his text is a Peloponnesian War rather than the Peloponnesian War."*¹

Postmodernism as an archaeological-historical interpretation of the past has been impacted on by several different conceptual approaches, which will be briefly mentioned and discussed here. The socio-anthropological instrumentalism and interactionism of F. Barth is especially influential. It maintains that ethnic identity is formed

¹ Marincola 2007: 3.

through the interaction of different groups, and that ethnicity can be transformed and manipulated as a kind of social and political instrument, rather than being an already predetermined, reified identity. *"The critical focus of investigation from this point of view becomes the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff it encloses."*² Thus, we can say that ethnicity is formed through the internal self-definition of the group, but also through the influence of the external observer, especially if the external observer is in a position of political or cultural-discursive dominance.³ In fact, it is possible to say that the construction of ethnic identity and culture is the result of both structure and agency, as ethnic groups construct their self-definition, but also manipulate culture and tradition for their common interests. Yet the construction of ethnicity is also impacted by external social, economic, and political processes in which the ethnic groups exist.⁴ The consequence of these approaches is that ethnic groups cannot be seen any more as reified, phenotypical, biologically determined social formations, but as a certain aspect of the 'imagined communities', as Anderson called the modern nations in his influential book, which constantly transformed their identity according to the different historical and political circumstances in which they existed.⁵

'Orientalism' and postcolonial criticism hold a special place in these new concepts. 'Orientalism' is, in short, a discursive perception of the cultural 'Other' that, through the accumulation of different cultural stereotypes, perceived the 'Other' as a pseudo-objective reality by the outsider. In many ways, the perception of the 'Other' as a group term plays a role in the self-definition of the one who is defining it, i.e. 'Us', as it emphasises that the 'They' represents everything 'We' are not. 'Orientalism' is also closely linked to the relationship of political power and discourse between those who dominate and those who are dominated, as for example between European colonisers and their colonies

² Barth 1969, quote from 15. Cf. the more recent interpretation of Barth's views in Vermeulen and Govers 1994, and Barth's own discussions on culture as an abstraction of reality, which have shaken the homogeneity of his earlier 'Us' and 'Them', Barth 1989.

³ R. Jenkins 1994, expanded in R. Jenkins 1997. Literature on ethnicity is too extensive to be mentioned here, see an overview in Banks 1996.

⁴ Nagel 1994. For the construction of tradition see the papers collected in Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983. The manipulation of ethnicity for political purposes is revealed in Cohen 1969: 3–4, 27, 198 ff.

⁵ Anderson 1983, see also the fierce attack on the view of ethnicity as primordial and predetermined in Eller and Coughlin 1993.

in the 19th and 20th centuries.⁶ Said's methodology was recently criticised with good reason, as he failed to distinguish between different contexts and genres in which those perceptions about the 'Orient' were created, as well as for his own 'Occidentalism' and the generalised stereotyping of western literature.⁷ Also, the 'binarism' of the opposed subjects in Said's 'orientalism' (Us/Them, Self/Other, East/West) cannot take into account the disproportionate relationship between those opposed subjects in their relation to discourse and power in which they exist.⁸ The poststructuralist interpretations, especially impacted by Foucault's view of history as subjectively composed narratives of the past, reveals close, inseparable links between discourse and power: "... discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it."⁹

Bhabha's concept of 'cultural hybridity', developed in the framework of postcolonial literary criticism, significantly affected the way that identities are seen today in scholarship, regardless of the period and region. According to Bhabha, 'hybridity' was the result of acculturation between two different cultures, usually in a dominant and submissive position of power ('coloniser' and 'colonised'). In that interaction the 'colonised' recombined and selectively accepted the existing cultural stereotypes of the 'coloniser' into a specific *tertium quid*, 'in-between' hybrid identity. Hybrids have no stable identity. They imitate but never duplicate the cultural narratives of the colonised, as negotiated, altered but also altering forces and figures, so in time both change: coloniser and colonised. Hybrids are fashioned through the process of 'cultural mimicry' of the colonised, seen as a form of resemblance which is at the same time a 'disruptive imitation' that alters the colonial narratives of identity. "*Mimicry is like camouflage, not a harmonization or repression of difference but a form of resemblance that differs/defends presence by displaying it in part, metonymically*". In

⁶ Said 1978, focusing on the European, western construction of the 'Orient'. It is often overlooked by the scholars that the 'colonised' also create their own pseudo-objective perception of the 'coloniser' ('Occidentalism'), see Bonner 2004.

⁷ Especially devastating in Ibn Warraq 2007, cf. the less substantiated, but valid criticism of Said, in Irwin 2006.

⁸ Bhabha 1994: 70–2. As mentioned before, the most recent scholarship developed a view of 'Balkanist' discourse as structurally different from Said's orientalism, seeing it as a liminal, in-between zone, or 'inside Other' e.g. Todorova 1997; Fleming 2000; Blažević 2007b.

⁹ Foucault 1981: 101; see also Munslow 1997: 120–39.

Bhabha's words, identities which are formed in the process of 'mimicry' are "... *almost the same, but not quite*".¹⁰

It is also important in this context to note the influence of Pierre Bourdieu's *habitus*, especially its frequent use in recent archaeological interpretations of ethnicity and identity-construction of peoples who have no written history. "*The habitus, the product of history, produces individual and collective practices, and hence history, in accordance with the schemes engendered by history.*"¹¹ Bourdieu's *habitus* is a complex concept which exists halfway between sociology and philosophy. It might be roughly described as an unconscious, but durable disposition towards certain common sense everyday perceptions and social practices, such as morality, tastes, the role of sexes in the division of labour, cuisine, communication, customs etc., which taken all together make a certain social landscape that is defined by Bourdieu as *habitus*. These dispositions constitute a particular social environment and are shaped by social and cultural practices and common experiences of the group, which shares the same *habitus*.¹²

*"Children are inducted into a culture, are taught the meanings which constitute it, partly through inculcation of the appropriate habitus. We learn how to hold ourselves, how to defer to others, how to be presence for others ..."*¹³

The consequence of these new approaches is that the earlier concepts, such as monolithic identities, static territoriality of culture or the view that national and ethnic identity stem from a 'cultural core' with added 'historical layers' that are irreparably shaken. Discrete cultural and ethnic stereotypes we know of from antiquity such as, for example, 'Greek', 'Roman', 'Barbarian', or 'Oriental', are revealed more as discursive constructions, rather than factual ethnic, 'racial', or cultural categories. The terms 'Roman' and 'Greek' begin to lose their meaning as cultural and ethnic singularities, and gradually reveal all the complexity that existed beneath them and the plurality of different ways in which people might have been 'Roman' or 'Greek'.¹⁴ These approaches have also

¹⁰ Bhabha 1994, the first quote is from 131, the second from 86.

¹¹ Bourdieu 1977: 82

¹² Bourdieu 1977: 72 ff.; 1990.

¹³ Taylor 1999: 42; and Swartz 1999: 95–116.

¹⁴ Dench 2005 (Roman identity); Hall 1997; 2002 (Greek identity); Woolf 1997; Webster 2001 (European provinces of Rome); Whitmarsh 2001; Goldhill 2003 (Greeks under Roman Empire), *inter alii*.

enabled concerted scholarly efforts in the deconstruction of a 'barbarian discourse' constructed by the dominant Graeco-Roman elite sources. Written sources from antiquity have been under scrutiny by the last generation of scholars for their colonial and imperial-centric perspectives, which used certain ethnic and cultural stereotypes in order to depict foreign peoples through the genre of ancient ethnography. The depiction of 'barbarians' is revealed as a discursive construction of the cultural 'Other', impacted by the power-relations and colonial interaction between Mediterranean and temperate Europe, or the 'East', rather than being accurate 'ethnographic' descriptions.¹⁵

Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* has become popular in modern archaeological and historical interpretations. It is especially useful as a tool of analysis in less complex societies which have weak or non-existent rules, as that society, in order to organise and function, relies more on learned dispositions.¹⁶ *Habitus* does not determine or represent personal or group identity, *per se*, or show ethnicity, but is a very significant part of its construction.¹⁷ Essentially, ethnic identity is formed through the perception of the difference between the cultural *habitus* in the interaction of different groups ('Us' and 'Them'), and thus it can be transformed and manipulated as a kind of social and political instrument, rather than being regarded as an already predetermined, reified structure. Thus, as S. Jones argues, ethnicity is constructed on the intersection between habitual dispositions (Barth's "cultural stuff") and particular social conditions, especially through the interaction between different forms of *habitus* and the continuous juxtaposition of cultural differences with the 'Other'. However, it is important to note that ethnicity is usually formed out of a few cultural elements that are used to mark the identity, rather than through the wholeness of the culture.¹⁸

In the same way, changes in the archaeological interpretation of the material culture are very significant. They are based on the criticism of

¹⁵ Hartog 1980; Dauge 1981; Cartledge 1993; Wells 1999; Ferris 2000 *inter alii*.

¹⁶ Bourdieu 1990: 145. The use of *habitus* in archaeological interpretation: Hodder 1986: 70–5; Jones 1996; 1997; Renfrew and Bahn 2004: 241–3. The use of Bourdieu's *habitus* in archaeology was also criticised by scholars for its selective use of elements, and in particular for omitting power-relations from the theory, Orser 2003: 129 ff.

¹⁷ Bentley 1987: 25–55 linked *habitus* and ethnicity and was rightly criticised by Yelvington 1989.

¹⁸ Jones 1996; 1997: 68–70. Curta recently emphasized the politisation of a cultural *habitus* as the basis for the construction of ethnicity in the early medieval period, Curta 2005a; 2007a. See also Lucy 2002, or Pohl 1998.

the Childe-Kossina methodology, or as is also known ‘culture-history approach’, which automatically linked material culture with the ‘ethnicity’ of those who used it. The position of this criticism is rather simple: the automatic linkage of objects of material culture and the identity of the social group which used them is an inadequate interpretation, as objects can exist in different contexts, such as social identity, fashion, regional peculiarities, etc. The interpretation of objects of material culture is shifted from ethnic to social and even individual contexts.¹⁹ It is significant to take into account the recent re-examination of the impact that nationalisms, or modern ideologies have made on the historical-archaeological interpretation of the objects of material culture,²⁰ the critical relation of contemporary archaeology towards migrations as ‘massive movements of peoples’,²¹ and the understanding that the scholarship has only recently started to decipher the ritual and contextual (social, sexual, class) significance of burial rituals in the post-Roman West.²²

Historians are today much more perceptive towards these new concepts, especially in the period of Late Antiquity and the ‘great migrations’, which is especially relevant to this book. As Goffart wrote plainly:

*“Realizing the minor role of invasions in late antiquity, shifting emphasis to the more important elements of change, and adjusting our language accordingly are desirable first steps toward conveying to the general public a truer-to-fact account of Rome and the barbarians in the early Byzantine period.”*²³

The scholarly metanarrative on the ‘Fall of the Roman Empire’ and the ‘Dark ages’ has been significantly shaken, as the focus of the research has shifted towards a broader range of evidence at hand, and the more recent scholarly interpretations see this period as a patchwork of change and continuity in post-Roman Europe.²⁴ This change in discourse is still a difficult task, because almost all modern European

¹⁹ Shennan 1989; Graves-Brown et al. 1996; Jones 1997; Curta 2001a: 24–35; Brather 2004b.

²⁰ Kohl and Fawcett 1995; Díaz-Andreu and Champion 1996; Graves-Brown et al. 1996; Kohl 1998; Galaty and Watkinson 2004.

²¹ Anthony 1990; 1997, explaining historical migration as a defined social strategy of the group that migrates, rather than aimless roaming. See also Härke 1998.

²² James 1989; Effros 2003; Halsall 1995a; 1995b; Härke 1990; Lucy 2000; Williams 2006 etc. and the overview in Symonds 2009.

²³ Goffart 1989b: 99.

²⁴ Halsall 2005, overviewing the interpretation of sources. See also Pohl 2008 overviewing the current debates.

nations reinterpreted the events from this period and incorporated them into their nation-constructing discourses.²⁵ The narratives of barbarian histories in the post-migration period from the likes of Jordanes, Paul the Deacon, Bede or Gregory of Tours, have been rightly seen as literary works of genre that often explain much more about their own times and authors than what they say about the past. As numerous authorities today claim, historical ‘truth’ and ‘lie’ are categories that imply our contemporary understanding, rather than the original message of these authors, or the understanding of their audience.²⁶

There are also new controversies arising in the interpretation, in particular differing views on the construction of identities in the period of the ‘great migrations’. ‘Ethnogenesis’ is the scholarly metanarrative which imply that the myths of the origins of peoples – *origo gentis*, were transmitted through discursive myths by elite groups of warriors, forming the core of tradition of future identity – *traditionskern*. It is today considered to be one of the most influential methodological frameworks for the research of late antique and early medieval identities.²⁷ Some scholars criticise this framework, pointing out that ‘peoples’ are an unstable category of group identity, primarily determined by the political factors that constantly change and manipulate them, so that the tradition represented as *origo gentis* is nothing more than a political manipulation of the ruling elites, which legitimised their rule. The critics of ‘ethnogenesis’ emphasise the importance of choice and the role of non-ethnic identities, such as regional or political identities, in the perception of identities in this period, a capability of ‘barbarian’ groups to come into being and construct themselves as ethnicities, downplaying the role of ethnicity as a primary historical force in this period.²⁸

It is important to clarify one point here, regarding the different meaning of the word ethnogenesis. The framework of ‘ethnogenesis’ of the Viennese school, as developed by Wenskus and elaborated by Wolfram and Pohl, was only relatively recently, in the late 1980s,

²⁵ Geary 2002; Pohl 2002; Curta 2001a; Goffart 2006; 2008; Amory 1997; Pohl and Reimitz 1998; Gillett 2002a.

²⁶ See the different approaches in: Wolfram 1990b; Goffart 1988; cf. Curta 2001a: 36–119 for the written sources on the Slav migrations.

²⁷ Wolfram 1981; 1988; 1990a; 1994; Pohl 1994; 2005, based on the ideas of Wenskus 1961.

²⁸ E.g. Goffart 1989a; Bowlus 1995a; Gillett 2002a; 2006: 246–53.

introduced into the debate on the Croat identity by Pohl and Budak, and later used by other scholars. However, historians and archaeologists from the region operated in the second part of the 20th century (and some still do) in the different theoretical framework of ethnogenesis, which is in many ways similar to the Soviet socio-anthropological school of Yulian Bromley. In essence, the terms ethnogenesis and ethnogenetic processes are seen in this context as *longue durée* processes of identity development from a stable 'core', which in a social vacuum evolved through different stages of socio-political organisation. In the beginning of that process smaller and amorphous communities (*narodnosne zajednice*=people-making communities) transformed through never clearly explained processes of metamorphosis (ethnogenetic processes) into larger groups (peoples), their future permanent identity-markers, their stable identity-core.²⁹ This is visible in the earlier research of Iron Age 'Illyrian' identities, but also in medieval history, mostly as an ideological tool connecting modern and early medieval identities.³⁰

The 'problems' with Illyricum and Dalmatia

The problem of the appearance of South Slavic identities is a highly disputed and controversial issue that has attracted heated scholarly debates over the last few centuries. It has impacted contemporary political and wider popular discourses on ethnicity and ethnic origins, as seen in chapter 1. The fact that pre-Slavic identities from Late Antiquity were replaced by later, medieval Slavic identities has still not been sufficiently explained, especially due to obscure written sources and scattered archaeological material. Unfortunately, this process of transformation is largely circumvented in the recent scholarship, and especially notable is the absence of Illyricum from fourteen of the published volumes of the monumental project, "*The Transformation of the Roman World*", sponsored by the European Science Foundation.³¹

²⁹ See Banks 1996: 17–24. Bromley's ethnogenesis is comprehensively criticised in Curta 2002, but also Kohl 1998: 230–3.

³⁰ Benac 1964; 1967. See also in a medieval context Ćirković 1995, who proposes the term 'ethnohistory' to distinguish it from the 'ethnogenesis' of the Viennese school.

³¹ The most recent significant synthetic works are Budak 1994; 1995a; Goldstein 1992; 1995; Supićić 1999; Budak and Raukar 2006. For the wider geo-historical framework, see Curta 2006; a useful synthesis of older scholarship and sources can be found in Fine 1983.

The recent monograph by Florin Curta³² has opened the doors into new possibilities for the interpretation of the processes of making and constructing Slavic identities in the post-Roman period. His deconstruction of the 'Slav ethnicity' from the age of the migrations is an excellent starting point for the new assessment of the origins of medieval Slavic identities in Illyricum. It has removed the notion that the Slavs 'flooded' into the Balkan Peninsula, as their numbers were much smaller than the earlier scholarship estimated; he showed that the 'Slavs' were an identity constructed by the 'orientalism' of the primary sources, who in fact never shared a common identity or a common 'homeland', although they might have shared some elements of a common cultural *habitus*. That common identity was constructed later in the Middle Ages.

New theoretical frameworks discussed earlier in this chapter represent a long awaited opportunity to re-examine the problems of a transition from pre-Slavic identities of Late Antiquity to medieval Slavic identities in post-Roman Dalmatia, and in a wider context, Illyricum. Illyricum still represents a significant problem for this interpretation. From the obscure sources, both material and written, it is not entirely clear what happened to the late antique population, what the relationship was between the indigenous population and the arrivals and how many arrivals there were. The general discontinuity in habitation is evident, and the change of identity undeniable through the appearance of Slavic languages in this area. Linguistic evidence for the spread of Slavic language has assumed that the beginnings of slavisation of ancient toponyms in this area can be dated to c. 650–750.³³ It is also impossible to disregard the testimony of the written sources, which clearly implies the appearance of the arrivals they called 'Sclavenes' (*Sklavenoi*, *Sklabenoi*) in this period. Archaeological evidence for the migration of Slavs into Dalmatia is sparse and broadly based upon the Kossina/Childe culture-history methodology that links objects of material culture with ethnicity.³⁴ The majority of sites with 'Avar' and 'Slav' artefacts are located in the Pannonian plains, while their

³² Curta 2001a.

³³ Šimunović 1999: 401–4.

³⁴ Archaeological evidence for the 'Slav' migration to Croatia was recently summarized in Piteša 2006: 195–7. See also Gračanin 2008: 30–8 for southern Pannonia; Kovačević 1969; Čremošnik 1970; 1975; Miletić 1989, and with different dating Sokol 1999; 2006. There is a similar methodology used for ascribing 'Slav' ethnicity to recent archaeological finds from early medieval times in Slovenia too; see for example Guštin 2002.

concentration in the Dinaric Alps and on the eastern Adriatic coast is minimal.³⁵ The explanation that certain artefacts, such as fibulae, pottery, or even burial rites, may be used as a detector of Slavic habitation is not fully satisfactory today. It should be said that cultural *habitus* can influence the making of stereotypes and the perception of a group from the external observer, or even, in time, became an emblem of the group when and if the group wished to self-define itself.³⁶

On the other hand, the survival of a late antique cultural *habitus* is noticeable in this region in several aspects. A significant level of urban continuity on the Dalmatian coast is visible in the archaeological record.³⁷ The anthropological and forensic evidence shows that there was no rapid and thorough change of population in this period.³⁸ The cultural *habitus* of the South Slavs in the later period reveals a continuity of the cultural *habitus* of the pre-Slavic population, especially in the archaeological evidence for material culture and in the burial pattern, ethnographic research, but also in the survival of pre-Slavic toponyms. Some linguists even claimed that non-Slavic linguistic components in the dialects of Slavic languages spoken in the interior of Dalmatia are perfectly integrated within structure of these languages, making them in many ways distinct from the other Slavic languages.³⁹

As explored in chapter 1, the change from late antique identities into Slavic identities in Illyricum has been explained in the past through one of two metanarratives in the earlier scholarship: the ‘migrationist’ and the ‘autochthonist’, which are sometimes combined to a certain degree. The ‘migrationist’ narrative implies that the change occurred because of the arrival/immigration of a new ethnic-cultural group. The interpretations of the arrival of the Croats differ in the scholarship,

³⁵ Evans 1989: Fig. 4.4 (the numbers are today certainly larger, but the ratio did not change much). A 158 of total 198 (79.8%) ‘Avar’ and ‘Slav’ sites are in the Pannonian plains and only 40 (20.2%) are in the Dinaric mountain-belt and eastern Adriatic coast. See the more up to date list of sites with ‘early Slav’ artefacts in southern Pannonia in Gračanin 2008: 31–7.

³⁶ See Curta 2001a: 247–310 and in a similar context Brather 2004a.

³⁷ Suić 1976: 227–62; 1999: 103–11; cf. Čače 1995.

³⁸ Certainly, physical differences cannot represent identity, *per se*. See the anthropological and forensic literature summarised in Mužić 2007: 111–16, and Šlaus 2002; 2006.

³⁹ Benac 1969 was an important pioneering attempt to explore this transition, see also Vinski 1971; Evans 1989: 156–8; Fig. 4.4.; Milošević 1990a; 1995; 2008; Rapanić 2001: 30 ff. (archaeology); Vinski 1969; Kulišić 1967; 1976; Mužić 2007: 87–120 (cultural *habitus*); Marković 2004: 207–16 (continuity of the toponyms); Brozović 1969 (language).

whether the arriving group is seen as belonging to the 'Slavs' or as a separate non-Slavic group. The 'autochthonist' narrative emphasises the importance of cultural continuity in Illyricum and minimises the importance of migrations, arguing that the indigenous population accepted the Slavic language in the process of acculturation.⁴⁰ However, the real problem of historical interpretation lies in fact beyond both the above mentioned grand-narratives. To paraphrase B. Ward-Perkins, the problem is not why the 'Slavs' did not become 'Illyrians' ('Dalmatians', 'Pannonians'), as something like that did not happen anywhere in Europe, because the migrations always resulted in the visible results of acculturation between the arrivals and the indigenous population, with the exception of England. The question is why this process of the creation of identity was so one-sided, favouring the 'Slavs' and the assumption of their identity?⁴¹

The most recent scholarly views on early Croat identity

It is difficult to give an overview of all the scholarly discussions which deal with early Croat identity, as this issue has attracted significant and frequently passionate attention of regional scholarship. Therefore, this overview must be selective, rather than comprehensive, focusing on the most influential and recent opinions. The debate has mainly focused on the analysis of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus' work, *De Administrando Imperio*, written in the mid-10th century, considered to be, to a certain degree, the only reliable existing written evidence of the Croat arrival in Illyricum, which will be discussed in more depth below pp. 104–17 below. The relative lack of archaeological evidence, and habitual dependence on written sources, has influenced a heavy focus in the scholarship on the textual evidence. However, there is now a visible growth in the archaeological and anthropological literature in the last decades, which will also be briefly overviewed.

In general, it is obvious that the focus of enquiry of regional scholars, Slovenian and Croatian in particular, but also Serbian and those from Bosnia and Herzegovina, tried to explain identity-transformation in Dalmatia and the appearance of Croat identity through the framework

⁴⁰ See pp. 16–17 and the overview of the scholarship in: Klaić 1990: 18–24; Švab 1995; Katičić 1999a: 155–66; Fine 2000.

⁴¹ Ward-Perkins 2000: 526, who discussed the Anglo-Saxons and Britons.

of ethnogenesis and ethnogenetic processes as *longue durée* process of identity-evolution. The dispute concerns the debate as to when exactly the Croats arrived and from where. In essence, the scholarly agreement is that the Croats arrived in Dalmatia at some point before the 9th century, and that the identity of the original group spread throughout the early medieval period from Dalmatia, where the 'core' of Croat ethnicity was formed. According to this view, the descendants of these immigrant Croats emerged a few centuries later, as an already fully formed ethnos who shared a sense of 'Croatness', in a territory which roughly corresponds with modern Croatia and what are today Croatian-majority areas in Bosnia and in Herzegovina.⁴² Scholars who are not from the region, such as Pohl and Fine, introduced other approaches to the problem. Pohl saw the earliest Croat identity as a social identity, while Fine saw Croat identity as essentially a political identity of the elite arising amongst the 'Slavs who flooded the Balkans' and whose majority did not assume 'Croatness' before modern times.

Medieval studies in Croatia and in most of the former Yugoslav space were firmly rooted in political history, and suffered from isolationism and a lack of interest in the foreign scholarship. In the communist era, especially after the 1960s, Marxist ideology and national and Yugoslav political-ideological frameworks strongly impacted on the research into medieval history in Croatia.⁴³ Another problem in the existing scholarship was the visible separation between history and archaeology. The problem with the historians was their reliance on very scarce written sources and an endemic lack of interest in archaeological research, or the selective use of archaeology in the earlier generations. On the other hand, the archaeology of the earlier generations was text-driven, the archaeologists looked at their evidence exclusively from 'culture-history' aspects,⁴⁴ trying to determine the identity and ethnicity of the inhabitants of post-Roman Dalmatia through the

⁴² Criticised by Fine 2006, especially 10–16 and ff.

⁴³ Budak 2004: 132–8. Beginning in the mid-1990s the situation rapidly improved, and Croatian medievalists started more intensely to engage with the international scholarship.

⁴⁴ Early medieval archaeologists until recently were trained in a variety of different disciplines with different methods and theoretical perspectives. The archaeologists who researched the early Middle Ages were often trained as prehistorians, Crabtree 2009: 880–1. A good example in Croatian archaeology is Zdenko Vinski, who combined his research interests in prehistory and Late Antiquity/early medieval migrations.

material evidence, relying on the scarce written evidence to fit in their finds, rather than through observing the material evidence in its own context.⁴⁵

Historians and linguists

The most accepted modern opinions on the appearance of Croat identity in post-Roman Illyricum in the historiography mainly derive from the analysis of chapters 29 to 36 of Constantine's DAI, in accordance with the historical metanarrative based on Rački, discussed above, pp. 18–19. Extensive analysis of the work, first by Hauptmann and later by Grafenauer in the mid-20th century, who upgraded and corrected the errors and inconsistencies of his predecessor, constructed a very influential migrationist theoretical model of the Croat arrival. Although primarily concerned with the analysis of the DAI, Grafenauer's analysis implied that the Croats arrived in two waves into Illyricum, the second one dating to the reign of the emperor Heraclius, c. 622/623 according to Grafenauer, or 637/638–641 according to Koščak, which caused a 'Slav' uprising against the Avars, and the break-up of the 'Avar-Slav alliance'.⁴⁶ This theoretical model was, in more recent times, argued for by Živković, the most distinguished Serbian medievalist of recent generations. He attempted to restore dignity to the evidence from the DAI, and saw the Serbs and Croats as distinctive Slavic migrants who arrived in c. 630–634, and fought their way to Illyricum through the Avars and finally became the *foederates* of Constantinople. Živković saw the 'Dark Ages' Illyricum as the settlement of almost virgin lands thoroughly depopulated of the pre-Slavic population by the earlier wars, especially in the Dalmatian hinterland, and taken over by the Slav multitudes.⁴⁷

In 1977 Lujo Margetić first noticed that the evidence for the Croat arrival and the existence of Croat identity in Dalmatia before the 9th century was very slim; it depended chiefly on the testimony of the DAI. He criticised the written sources, such as *Historia Salonitana*, *Chronicle of Presbyter Diocleas* and, most importantly, the DAI, as unreliable primary sources. In particular his criticism targeted chapters 29 and 31 of

⁴⁵ See Curta 2004b: 371–2, 375.

⁴⁶ Grafenauer 1950; 1952 esp. 32 ff., updating Hauptmann 1924; 1937, while both used the pioneering analysis of Bury 1906. Accepted by Ferjančić 1959; Klaić 1971: 64–5, 133–40; Koščak 1988 though with some differences. See also the similar framework in Lj. Maksimović 1996; Živković 2007a: 197–8.

⁴⁷ Živković 1997a; 2000: 58–66; 2007a: 187 ff.

the DAI, which implied that the Croat arrival occurred during the reign of Heraclius, and combined the evidence from chapters 29, and in particular Croat *origo gentis*, from chapter 30, to redate the Croat arrival to a later period. He postulated that the Croats were the descendants of the supporters of either one Kouvratos/Kobratos from Bulgar *origo gentis*, or rebel Kouber the Bulgar from the 7th century, who settled in the late 8th or early 9th century in Dalmatia, probably in the background of the Frankish war with the Avars.⁴⁸ Margetić's views sent shockwaves throughout the contemporary scholarly scene, and his methodological approaches were criticised by a concerted chorus of other scholars in the field, especially his use of archaeological and written sources, as well as a lack of cited literature outside of scholarship in modern South Slavic languages.⁴⁹

Nada Klaić emphasised the importance of chapter 30 of the DAI for an analysis of the Croat arrival, while at the same time downplaying the story of the arrival of the Croats from White Croatia from the same chapter, rejecting the major part of the Byzantine narrative from chapters 29 and 31.⁵⁰ Firstly agreeing with the mainstream interpretation of the DAI by Grafenauer, she turned to 'the dark side of the Force' and changed her earlier opinions later in life, ultimately embracing Margetić's redating of the arrival of the Croats in post-Roman Dalmatia, and Kunstmann's linguistic studies arguing the idea of the Croat migration from Illyricum. Klaić, however, elaborated upon Margetić's views and argued that the Croats arrived in Dalmatia in the late 8th/early 9th centuries from the northwest, from Carantania in northern Slovenia and southern Austria.⁵¹ The significance of Klaić is also in the fact that she fully acknowledged the importance of the inheritance of antiquity on the development of Croat medieval identity, and the continuity of habitation between Late Antiquity and early medieval times.⁵²

⁴⁸ Margetić 1977; 1985; 1994a; 1995a, see also the collection of his works in Margetić 2001a, and a summary of his main ideas 2001a: 9–37.

⁴⁹ Suić 1977; Katičić 1985: 309–10 n. 49; also Koščak 1987; Štih 1987: 530–6, cf. Švab 1995: 57–8. Even Margetić criticised himself, assuming the possibility of the Croat arrival c. 670, Margetić 1985: 238. The basics of his thesis were accepted by Ančić 1998: 16–17, and developed in Ančić 2001a and 2001c.

⁵⁰ Klaić 1984: 257–9; 1985: 46–58; 1988; 1990: 21–3.

⁵¹ Klaić 1984; 1990: 18–27. She was criticised by the Slovenian historian Štih 1987: 536–45.

⁵² Klaić 1990: 9–12. This view is shared amongst the most significant historians of the next generation, such as Budak or Goldstein.

The distinguished Croatian linguist and historian Radoslav Katičić attempted to restore partial dignity to the primary sources, which were shaken by the interpretations of Margetić and Klaić – in particular the evidence deriving from the DAI. He argued that the DAI and the *Historia Salonitana* of Thomas the Archdeacon in certain places drew information from the same sources, such as, for example, the Croat narrative from chapter 30 of the DAI. Katičić accepted the evidence about the arrival of the Croats in the 7th century as presented in the DAI, including in his interpretation even the dubious Byzantine narrative from chapter 31, which has been mainly rejected by earlier scholars. He argued that there was a pact (*foedus* and *stipendium* or *salarium*) between Heraclius and the Croats, which was established on the same basis as that with the Franks after 812, when the Croats came under Frankish power. Katičić was also cautiously open towards the idea of an Iranian etymology of the Croat name, but stated that they were thoroughly slavified when they arrived in post-Roman Illyricum.⁵³

Ivan Mužić and his works on the origins of the Croats have been frequently disputed by the academic scholarship, especially after the strong rebuff of the first edition of his book on the autochthonous origins of the Croats in Dalmatia in the review of Katičić.⁵⁴ Mužić's approach and methodology indeed deserved a significant degree of criticism, especially his literary objectivist and naïve reading of the earlier scholarship and primary sources, in particular the Gothic narrative from 'Thomas the Archdeacon and the Presbyter Diocleas' accounts of Late Antiquity in Dalmatia and the fall of Salona. In some aspects though, he offered an interesting and fresh approach and contributed to the debate on the earliest Croat identity. Mužić diminished the importance of Slav migrations in the 6th and 7th centuries, and strongly emphasised the role of the indigenous population for whom he used the term 'Dalmatini', seeing them as the successors of the indigenous Delmatae from pre-Roman times. He presented the early medieval Croat kingdom in his narrative, as a complex patchwork of different indigenous and migrated identities (the 'Dalmatini', Slavs and Croats), who cohabited inside the political framework of the mediaeval Croat state.⁵⁵

⁵³ Katičić 1982; 1985; 1987; 1999a.

⁵⁴ Mužić 2001; 2007; Katičić 1989.

⁵⁵ Mužić 2007, much better articulated in Mužić 2008. He was welcomed by classical archaeologists of the earlier generation, such as Suić (foreword to the first and

Celebrated Austrian historian Walter Pohl analysed the Croats in the framework of his influential study of the Avars, which elaborated upon the earlier ideas of Kronsteiner and Wolfram.⁵⁶ He placed the issue of the earliest Croat identity in the framework of the above discussed Wenskus-Wolfram-Pohl 'ethnogenesis' approach. He introduced into the debate very important new idea of the Croats as essentially a social identity, an honorific title rather than an ethnonym, which crystallised in the context of the Avar qaganate. Pohl criticised the evidence derived from the DAI and proposed the alternate view that the 'ethnogenesis' of the Croats occurred in two phases, first – the migration of the Slavs around 600 and their habitation inside the Avar qaganate, and second – the political arrival of the Franks into Central Europe, which restructured the previous political situation. He saw that the Croat identity rose with the rulers, or developed amongst the elite warrior groups who imposed themselves as masters of the Slavic groups at the periphery of the qaganate, such as Borna's *praetoriani* from the 9th century, organized after the Avar example, and developed into a political and subsequently ethnic identity. This view is accepted, with difference in interpretation, amongst some scholars of more recent times.⁵⁷

Ivo Goldstein, Neven Budak and Mladen Ančić lead the most recent generation of Croatian medievalists in the 1990s and 2000s, who approached this problem with more advanced methodologies. Regarding the origins of the Croats, Goldstein followed the opinion of Grafenauer and Ferjančić and dated the Croat arrival into post-Roman Illyricum to the 7th century, using evidence which derived from the DAI. Ančić followed Margetić's idea of the Croat settlement in the late 8th/early 9th centuries, while Budak carefully sits on both sides of the fence. Goldstein focused his research on the interaction between the Eastern Romans and the Dalmatian coast in Late Antiquity and early medieval times, and the significant impact that the Byzantine

back word to the sixth editions of Mužić 2001; Zaninović (foreword in Mužić 2007: 9–18) and medievalists I. Rendić-Miočević 2002: 4–5, and Rapanić 2006. Even his opponents admitted the importance of a pre-Slavic population in the development and construction of the earliest Croat identity, e.g. Budak 1995b: 78 n. 25. See the detailed critical review of his work in Alimov 2007; also criticism of Curta 2008b: 168.

⁵⁶ Kronsteiner 1978; cf. Wolfram 1979: 89.

⁵⁷ Pohl 1985; 1988: 16, 261–7; 1995: 222–3. See also Margetić 1995a: 38–55; and in different contexts Fine 2000: 212–15; 2006: 45–6, 50–1; Curta 2006: 141–4; Madgeary 2008: 158. Cf. the earlier thinking in a similar direction by Klaić 1984: 260–1.

cultural discourse had on Dalmatia and Croats of this period. He doubted the narratives on the 'fall of Salona', implying that Salona was abandoned by its inhabitants and that the Slavs settled in Dalmatia mostly in a peaceful way.⁵⁸ Budak, on the other hand, modernised the migrationist approach to the problem of Slav migrations and incorporated the arrival of the Slavs, and the appearance of the Croats, in a more sophisticated 'ethnogenesis' framework of the Viennese school, in his works on Croat identity and medieval history. Budak argued, similar to Pohl (p. 47 above), that the Croats were initially a social group formed inside the Avar qaganate. In his important synthesis from 1994, Budak acknowledged that in the formation of the earliest Croat identity, the 'Slav' element played the most significant role, with small Iranian and indigenous influences.⁵⁹

Ančić pointed out the crucial significance in Carolingian times for the appearance of the Croat identity in post-Roman Dalmatia. He drew upon Margetić's basic idea of the later Croat settlement, using more sophisticated historical methodologies and approaches, postulating significant population movements with a Carolingian blessing, after the end of the Avar qaganate in the very late 8th century.⁶⁰ Both Budak and Ančić strongly implied the influence of Carolingian political structures on the unification and development of the later Croat political unit of the 9th century, while Budak successfully showed the different perspectives of the sources which were used in the description of group identities in 9th century Dalmatia, which warned of the unjustified assumptions about Croat identity before that time.⁶¹ However, maybe the most important contribution of Budak and Ančić to the scholarship was their de-emotionalisation of the earliest Croat identity research, a full break from the emotional detachment between present Croatian and early Croat identity, and the return of the earliest Croat identity to where it belongs – the early medieval times.⁶²

One of the most recent works on Croat identity by the US scholar Fine reached the conclusion that Croat identity was just one of the group identities from the medieval Croat kingdom, and the territory of

⁵⁸ Goldstein 1992; 1995; 1996a; 1998; 2003; the abandonment of Salona 1992: 83–111; peaceful settlement 2003: 23–5.

⁵⁹ Budak 1990; 1994: 11–14, 55–70.

⁶⁰ Ančić 2001a, and in Italian Ančić 2001c, cf. Ančić 1998: 16–7 on evidence from the DAL.

⁶¹ Ančić 1997; 2005a; Budak 1997, and Budak 2008 for identities in 9th century Dalmatia.

⁶² Budak 1994; Budak and Raukar 2006; Ančić 2008a: 32–51.

Croatia in late medieval and early modern times, reinstated as a core for national-constructing discourse by parts of the local intellectual elite. He saw the Croats initially as the identity of a very small elite group.⁶³ Otherwise, very important research, which deconstructed the assumption of popular medieval Croatness as a self-conscious historical agent, was seriously flawed by the author's 'balkanising' approach to the problem. The approach is revealed in language and attitude, participating in the discourse on the sameness and difference which dominated the ways 'Balkans' were, and obviously still continue to be, constructed and imagined in the western imagination. The title of the book (un)consciously recalls the mythical 'golden age' before nationalism when, "*ethnicity did not matter in the Balkans*", presenting ethnicity as a negative value connected to the 'Balkans', an area self-obsessed with its ethnicities and their perception of internal difference, instead of recognising and sharing its own 'Balkan' sameness.⁶⁴ It is quite surprising that the same author claimed completely opposite views in his co-authored earlier book, where he argued that the territory of what are today Bosnia and Herzegovina was inhabited from medieval times by a religiously mixed people who shared popular 'Bosnian' identity.⁶⁵

The imposition of the Yugoslav state-construction over the past in Fine's analytical framework ("*future Yugoslavia*", "*western Yugoslav territory*", "*Yugoslavs*") was another structural weakness of the book which was published 15 years after Yugoslavia disintegrated. The use of this framework is rather surprising, taking into account that Yugoslavia was itself a territorial and ideological construction existing in completely different contexts such as Illyrianism, Serbian expansionism, Communist yugoslavism, Milošević's yugoslavism, etc.⁶⁶ It is also

⁶³ Fine 2006.

⁶⁴ "If, according to outside observers, it is difficult to distinguish between the Balkan states and peoples, it is still more difficult (say those same observers) for Balkan peoples themselves to stop making distinctions between themselves, and to stop killing one another senselessly over those distinctions." Fleming 2000: 1219.

⁶⁵ Donia and Fine 1994. The book also made numerous bold and unsubstantiated claims related to the purposes of everyday politics of the 1990s, and the historical discourse constructed by Bosniak nationalists. See Svirčević 2007: 277–82.

⁶⁶ The author's claims that South Slavs "*missed*" the opportunity to unite and blend into Yugoslav 'ethnicity', because they were not "*able*" to achieve the unification as, presumably more civilised, French or Germans could, Fine 2006: 6–7, 14–15, or 561–2. See Hutchinson 2005, who criticised Geary on the same grounds for making new myths while deconstructing the old ones, and Drapac 2010 for different discursive constructions of Yugoslavia in English and French intellectual and popular thought in 19th and 20th century.

unfortunate that Fine's focus of analysis was heavily based on outside sources, which frequently used stereotypical subjective perceptions in order to describe the 'barbarian' population of the region, and cannot be accepted as decisive evidence for either the presence or absence of Croatness, which indeed was only one of the identity-narratives in pre-modern Croatia.⁶⁷

In more recent times linguists also had their views on the appearance of Croat identity in Dalmatia. They mostly saw it inside of the framework of the Slav migrations, assuming that Slavic languages were spread through those migrations. The more conservative approach was maintained by Birnbaum, who recognised the separate migrations of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians, and the subsequent merging of Serb and Croat languages through linguistic contacts and the separation of the speakers of the Kajkavian dialect from Croatian Zagorje in north-western Croatia from what he saw as their original Slovenian language. Not so far from Birnbaum, P. Ivić argued that two migrations were happening; the second one came from the west, and filled the gap between the eastern (Bulgarian, Torlakian, Macedonian) and the western branch of the south Slavic languages (Slovenian language and Kajkavian dialect) with the dialects of the Serb and Croat language. Kunstmann was more controversial, with his claims that the Slavs first migrated into post-Roman Illyricum as shapeless groups without a binding sense of identity and after some time, in which they started to develop specific identities, a part of these southern Slavs migrated north again towards Central and Northern Europe.⁶⁸ The linguistic evidence for the process we today label 'Slav migrations' is shown as insufficiently reliable, and the most recent works approach it with caution,⁶⁹ especially taking into account the challenge to the assumption that the spread of the Slavic language must be attributed to 'Slav migrations'.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ E.g. "And thus one would never stop to think that if a "Slav" in place X was really Croat, why, then, did the source say he was a 'Slav'?", (Fine 2006: 11). See critical review of Fine's book in Budak 2009a.

⁶⁸ Birnbaum 1992; P. Ivić 1972: 66–72. The works of Kunstmann are collected in Kunstmann 1987, whose views were accepted with some reservations by Klaić 1990: 19–20 n. 4, but criticized with reason by Štih 1995a: 128, 131–4.

⁶⁹ Barford 2001: 13–19.

⁷⁰ Lunt 1984/85; 1985; Nichols 1993; Curta 2004a.

Material evidence: Archaeologists, anthropologists, epigraphists

The archaeology of post-Roman Dalmatia has produced a number of significant works that deal with Late Antiquity and the early medieval period. The number of publications that deal with the early medieval period has significantly increased in the last decades. With occasional reservations, archaeology is still strongly dominated by the concept of culture-history and culture-ethnicity, which is especially visible in the attempts to ascribe to the whole archaeological culture of post-Roman and early medieval times – ‘Old-Croat’ (*Starohrvatska*) culture – Croat ethnicity,⁷¹ or to recognise the ethnicity of the ‘Slavs’ and the pre-Slav population, their paganism and Christianity, through the material records and burials. The poststructuralist approach is just beginning to appear, such as, for example, the work of Huw Evans, which unfortunately did not have any visible continuation, or any significant echoing, in Croatian archaeology from the 1990s or 2000s. The foundations of the research are based upon the works of the Croatian antiquarian Aloysius (Lujó) Marun (1857–1939) and periodization and systematization of excavated material by art-historian Ljubo Karaman (1886–1971). Archaeology of the post-Roman and early medieval period after 1945 has been dominated by the voluminous work of Zdenko Vinski, but also with great contributions from Janko Belošević, Željko Rapanić, Dušan Jelovina, Ivo Petricioli, Zlatko Gunjača, Nada Miletić and in more recent times the most distinguished works were produced by Ante Milošević, Mirja Jarak, Maja Petrinec, Radomir Jurić, Željko Tomićić and Vladimir Sokol, and in the domain of art history and architecture contributions of Nikola Jakšić and Mirko Jurković.⁷²

⁷¹ Criticism of the term ‘Old-Croat’ in the Croatian archaeology started to develop in the later 1980s, e.g. Rapanić 1987: 15–16; Jakšić 1989: 414–15; and also Evans 1989: 30–5 in English. This book will use the term ‘Old-Croat’ as an archaeological term, without implying any links with Croat identity.

⁷² See the encompassing overview of Croatian scholarship by Evans 1989: 23–7 and most recently Jarak 2006; Sokol 2006: 13–29. The most significant synthetic works which deal with post-Roman times are: Dimitrijević et al. 1962; Vinski 1971; Jelovina 1976; Belošević 1980 (his chronology is somewhat questionable, see Jarak 2006: 197–8); Sokol 2006, and the collection of works in Milošević 2000a. There is also the forthcoming and much anticipated publication of Petrinec (Petrinec 2009 – unfortunately not available to this author during the writing of this book), which would represent the most up to date and comprehensive study of the ‘Old-Croat’ cemeteries. The only important synthetic archaeological work thus far in English is Evans 1989 (in abbreviated version Evans 1995); see also the collection of works in Supićić 1999.

The archaeology is mostly concerned with the cultural and ethnic changes brought about by the migration period in post-Roman western Illyricum. The largest problem is the absence of the evidence for the 'Slav migrations' in the material record of the 6th and early 7th centuries. The research has focussed especially on the graves and cemeteries from this period, and the material evidence from the graves which constituted the so-called 'Old-Croat' archaeological culture, because the settlements outside of the Dalmatian cities were difficult to locate, and no evidence apart from Nin is so far known. The cemeteries of the 'Old-Croat' culture are divided into the earlier 'Pagan' and later 'Christian' horizon, the division going back to Karaman. The appearance of the graves in the earlier 'Pagan' horizon is difficult to date, and is assumed to be in early 8th century, but its end is dated with certainty at c. 850/855, when grave-goods disappeared and the old cemeteries were abandoned and new ones were placed around churches. The exploration of Latin inscriptions and architecture from the pre-Romanesque period on the Dalmatian coast (9th- 11th centuries), is also an important part of the archaeological evidence from this period. A number of important works were produced which deal with the material evidence attributed to the Slavs and Avars,⁷³ the Ostrogoths⁷⁴, as well as the research of material culture in post-Roman Istria,⁷⁵ and finally the earliest (or 'Pagan' horizon) 'Old-Croat' cemeteries on the early medieval Dalmatian coast and immediate hinterland, which are dated between the 7th and mid-9th centuries.⁷⁶

In the same way as the historians – the archaeologists are also divided about dating the Croat arrival in post-Roman Dalmatia, but it is important to note that both approaches are still deeply embedded into the culture-history approach. The debate is focused on the dating of the earliest cemeteries of the 'Old-Croat' culture. Some archaeologists see it in accordance with the views of Margetić and the later opinions of N. Klaić and Ančić, therefore arriving in the late 8th/early 9th centuries, while the majority still follow the chronological framework determined by the DAI and assume that the Croats arrived in the first wave of the migrations, which was attributed to the Slavs and Avars. The most

⁷³ Vinski 1958; see also amongst the others – Dimitrijević 1957; Šmalcelj 1981; Milošević 1990b; Filipec 2002/03; Čremošnik 1970; 1975; 1977; Miletić 1989.

⁷⁴ Vinski 1989; Simoni 1989; Demo 1994; Uglešić 1994/95; 1996.

⁷⁵ Marušić 1969; 1987a; 1987b.

⁷⁶ Jelovina 1976; Belošević 1980; 2000; 2007a; R. Jurić 1994/95; 2007; Z. Gunjača 1995; Jarak 2002; Petrincec 2002; Sokol 2006 etc.

influential opinion is that of Belošević, who argued that the Croats arrived in the 7th century. He dated the pre-Christian Dalmatian cemeteries to c. 700–850, while the absence of the 7th century cemeteries was ascribed to the cremation, which was in his opinion the original burial custom of the arrived Slavs-Croats. The transfer from cremation to inhumation in the 8th century was ascribed to contacts with the indigenous population, who kept continuity with late antique traditions. The more recent studies of Jarak and Petrinc strengthened the belief that the earliest 'Old-Croat' inhumations can be dated to the 8th century and emphasise a cultural continuity between the 'Pagan' and 'Christian' horizons. They reinforced the opinion that there was no separate Croat migration in the 9th century, but that the Croats migrated in the 7th century into post-Roman Dalmatia.⁷⁷

The other group of scholars question the dating of the earliest 'Old-Croat' burials in the 'Pagan' horizon in 8th century. Rapanić and Milošević noticed strong cultural links between Late Antiquity and the material evidence from the post-Roman period, and tried to find evidence for the survival of the indigenous population, arguing for a co-existence of the amorphous 'Slavs' and the indigenous population before the 9th century, as well as the arrival of the Croat group in the late 8th/9th centuries. The appearance of Carolingian objects in the 'Old-Croat' cemeteries are linked to the arrival of the Croats. In this context it is important to separate the opinion of Sokol, who believed in the Croat arrival in the 9th century, but was contrary to Rapanić and Milošević and argued that the notion of a continuity with Late Antiquity in the 'Old-Croat' culture is doubtful, and that the 'Old-Croat' culture was an entirely new culture – introduced, in his opinion, c. 800 by the Croats.⁷⁸ The only opinion dissenting from this general culture-history approach is that of Evans, who saw no material evidence for a separate Croat migration, either early or late, and attributed the appearance of Croat identity and the early medieval state to an internal development inside the unitary material culture of the Dalmatian Slavs which lasted from the Slav migrations in the 7th to the Carolingian expansion in the 9th century.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Belošević 1980; 2000; Z. Gunjača 1995; Jarak 2002; Petrinc 2002; Piteša 2006. See Jelovina 1976: 76–7, who strongly emphasised links between late antique and 'Old-Croat' cemeteries.

⁷⁸ Rapanić 1985: 12–14; 2001; Milošević 2001; 2007; Sokol 2006.

⁷⁹ Evans 1989: 152–8.

Genetic and anthropological works have become more popular in the last two decades. The genetic research must be taken cautiously, as genetics cannot show group identities, which are socially constructed, rather than biological phenomena. Discussing the percentage of 'Illyrian' or 'Slavic' genes in the modern Croatian population does not explain the construction of Croat identity, either in the past or in the present, and threatens to shift the debate of Croat history back into the racial theories of the past. But different genetic studies of the population present a completely different pictures of the past in their conclusions. Some of these studies point out that there was no significant change of population, and that the sample of modern Croatians comprise a significant amount of 'pre-Slavic genes,' whatever that might mean. Other studies emphasise the connection of South Slavic 'gene-pools' with other Slavs, thus claiming that the Slav migrations from the north replaced the earlier population in the Balkan Peninsula.⁸⁰ The anthropological research of Šlaus on the other hand, has made a significant contribution to Croatian archaeology in recent years, although his conclusions related to the ethnicity of the analysed remains should be taken with caution.⁸¹ Using advanced scholarly methodologies, he has immensely increased our understanding of the way of life, the demography and diseases of the early medieval populations in modern Croatia. Šlaus also supported the idea of the Croat migration from modern-day Poland, and strongly emphasised the possibility of 'Croat' migrations from Dalmatia to Pannonia in the period between the 10th and 13th centuries.⁸²

The research of cultural continuity in the transition from antiquity to early medieval times and the survival of the pre-Slavic population in the material record in post-Roman Illyricum have been frequently reflected in recent scholarship. It is especially emphasised in the research of the art-history and architecture of pre-Romanesque Dalmatia, often dominating the focus of research.⁸³ Also there are

⁸⁰ Semino et al. 2000; Barač et al. 2003; I. Jurić 2005 (no migrations); Bosch et al. 2006; Malyarchuk et al. 2006 (migrations) even influencing the most recent synthetic works on Croatian history, Budak and Raukar 2006: 42–3. See the criticism of the 'genetical' approaches in Croatian history by Aralica 2006.

⁸¹ See the strong criticism of assumptions of ethnicity from an anthropological analysis in Tyrell 2000; Lucy 2000: 74; Effros 2003: 105–8.

⁸² Šlaus et al. 2004; see also Šlaus 1998; 1999/00; 2002.

⁸³ Rapanić 1987; Suić 1976: 253–62; 1999: 103–11; see also Cambi 1999; I. Rendić-Miočević 2002.

works on the continuity of the cultic sites and buildings from Late Antiquity in the wider area of post-Roman Dalmatian islands, coast, and the immediate hinterland,⁸⁴ as well as continuity in burial rites, grave-goods and pottery.⁸⁵ The Carolingian cultural influences in the material record from the 9th century also have attracted noticeable attention in the more recent scholarship,⁸⁶ and early medieval epigraphy,⁸⁷ as well as the research of Byzantine coins found in Dalmatia between the 7th and 9th centuries.⁸⁸

The scholarship on early medieval history and the archaeology of post-Roman and early medieval Dalmatia is a very vibrant and exciting area of study; it is unfortunate that only in recent years has it become more available and known to scholars outside of the region. It is very significant for a comparative analysis with other regions of the post-Roman world, because of its peculiar position in-between the Merovingian-Langobardic West, the Avar Central Europe and Byzantine Eastern Mediterranean; also for assessing the effects of the Carolingian 'revolution' on the peripheral areas in the 9th century.

⁸⁴ Migotti 1992a; Jarak 1995; Fisković 1985; 1995; 1999/00; Jakšić 1995; 2008; Gudelj 2006; Vedriš 2009.

⁸⁵ Milošević 1990a; 1995; 2005.

⁸⁶ E.g. Vinski 1977/78; 1983; Jelovina 1986; Milošević 2001; Belošević 1997; 2007b; Jurković 1988/89; 2001.

⁸⁷ Delonga 1996; 2001; Matijević-Sokol 1999.

⁸⁸ Mirnik and Šemrov 1997/98; Mirnik 2004.

3. IDENTITIES BEFORE THE SLAVS

In order to understand the process which would lead to the appearance of medieval Slavic identities, it is of crucial importance to see it, not as a sudden process which occurred in the post-Roman period, but as part of a larger process of transformations in the late antique world in which Illyricum and its parts belonged. For that reason it is necessary to say a few words about the historical and cultural background of the population of late Roman Illyricum.

Identities in Illyricum in the Late Iron Age

The methodology related to the research of identities in Iron Age Illyricum was developed in the 1960s, ending the so-called pan-Illyrianism of previous generations which were developed by Gustav Kossina and the works of his followers. The understanding of 'Illyrians' in Kossina's framework reflected the Germanocentric view of the 'Illyrian homeland', located around the German city of Lausitz (Luzice), which assumed that their European-wide expansion reached towards the 'warm seas' of the Adriatic and Aegean during, what he saw as, the late Bronze Age *Völkerwanderung*.¹ Post-Kossina scholarly methodology which deals with pre-Roman identities rests on the methodological tripod made up of: the archaeology of regional Iron Age cultures, onomastics, and the interpretation of the reports on Illyricum and its population in Greek and Roman written sources. The scholars recognised the significance of differences between individual groups in the region, but still maintained a view of their cultural kinship and connectivity on territory loosely corresponding with the frontiers of the former federal Yugoslavia and Albania.² Archaeology defined and located Iron Age cultural groups in Illyricum, such as the Liburnian,

¹ Kossina 1920; paleolinguistics: Krahe 1925, *inter alia*. The proceedings of the scholarly symposia in Sarajevo published as Benac 1964; 1967 can be seen as the official end of Kossina's framework.

² Onomastics in Illyricum was developed by Untermann, Alföldy and Katičić. See the detailed overview of the existing methodological approaches in Benac 1987 (archaeology); Wilkes 1992: 40–87; Šašel Kos 2005: 223 ff. (whole framework).

Central Dalmatian (Gorica), Iapodean, Histrian, Central Bosnian, Glasinac-Mati, etc., grouping the artefacts of their material cultures into taxonomic types and sub-types. Onomastics analysed indigenous personal names, recorded mainly on Roman-era inscriptions, and accordingly defined certain onomastic areas, such as Liburno-Histrian, Delmato-Pannonian, ethnic (or south) Illyrian, Dardano-Thracian and Iapodean. Graeco-Roman sources which dealt with this area, such as the Hellenistic *periploi*, the geographical works of Strabo and Ptolemy, the historians Cassius Dio and Appian, the 'encyclopaedist' Pliny the Elder and Roman-era inscriptions etc., provided group names for these communities, at least from the perspective of ancient times, and made this tripod complete.³

However, this methodological tripod leaning on culture-history approach was not constructed to survive the poststructuralist approach which is outlined in chapter 2. Determining ethnicity simply through archaeological artefacts no longer holds a prominent place in the archaeological agenda. It is also difficult to see today that research into personal names is a serious tool for establishing ethnicity, *per se*. Finally, it is no longer possible to maintain the view of a loose kinship between the 'Illyrian peoples', for the analysis of identities in this region. This framework, even in its territorially reduced form, as developed in the 1960s, was ideologically intertwined with the frontiers of federal Yugoslavia. When the geo-political and ideological framework of the Yugoslav state started to dissolve in the 1970s with the decentralized Constitution of 1974, which gave substantial independence to the individual Yugoslav republics, the rising nationalism and subsequent disintegration in the 1980s, the deconstruction of the 'Illyrian' metanarrative began. There quickly emerged the view that the 'Illyrians' were a group of different identities united by the ancient sources under a common name, which reflected the Roman administrative terminology.⁴ As the Yugoslav political construction faded away from memory in the decades after the post-Yugoslav conflicts, it became easier to

³ Wilkes 1969: 1–9, 481–6; Alföldy 1965: 33–40. More recent and relevant treatment of the written sources: Cassius Dio: Šašel Kos 1986; Appian: Šašel Kos 2005; Strabo: Šašel Kos 2002; Marion 2006; Dzino 2006b; 2008a; Pliny: Marion 1998; Domić-Kunić 2004 etc.

⁴ Benac 1987. This view was still affected by the view of identity as a derivative of 'objective' factors, a cultural phenomenon opposed to social structures, formed in a historical/political/social vacuum, so that the numerous problems in interpretation remained, as Benac himself noted 1987: 800.

develop more insightful approaches and assess the identity of these peoples without a cognitive pasting of Yugoslav frontiers over the space of ancient Illyricum.⁵ Today, it is difficult to maintain this framework, even for the most distinguished scholars in the field.⁶

The process of the re-assessment of pre-Roman identities in this region is currently in the transition towards its next phase. It is inevitably going to move towards the wider context of the debate on identities in antiquity, shifting attention from character and a qualitative analysis of ethnic groups, towards a social context in which these groups were formed, especially focusing on their social organisation as a tool that might help to establish a more flexible explanatory framework. In overly simplified terms, it is possible to say that the process of identity-construction in the region was related to the development of more complex indigenous socio-political structures, from c. the 4th century BC. The process of Mediterranean 'globalisation' significantly affected the creation of indigenous political structures, later recognised as ethnicities, through the generalisation and 'orientalism' of the Graeco-Roman sources, and their ethnographical discourse on 'barbarian' peoples. The contacts with the Mediterranean world played a crucial role in the development of more centralised and hierarchical social structures amongst the indigenous political structures in what would become Illyricum.⁷ On the other hand, it is important to note that the spread of the La Tène ('Celtic') cultural matrices in 4th and 3rd century BC made a significant impact on the indigenous population in the hinterland, especially in southern Pannonia and northern Dalmatia, which incorporated those influences into the development of their own identity-construction.⁸

Roman-era identities in Illyricum

The Roman super-power acquired this area in a piecemeal way from the first Illyrian war of 229 BC to AD 9, when the *bellum Batonianum* was finished.⁹ Illyricum, which was divided into the provinces of

⁵ See: Šašel Kos 2005: 222–3; Olujić 2004; Dzino 2008c; Matijašić 2009: 30–50.

⁶ Periša 2002, criticising the Croatian translation of Wilkes 1992.

⁷ Olujić 2007: 189–94; Dzino 2008b (the Iapodes); Dzino 2006a (the Delmatae); Cabanes 1988: 207–33; 1999 (southern Illyrians).

⁸ La Tène impact: Majnarić-Pandžić 1996; Dizdar and Potrebica 2005; Dzino 2007.

⁹ Wilkes 1969: 13–77; Šašel Kos 2005: 249–516; Matijašić 2009: 87–176; Dzino 2010a.

Illyricum superius very soon renamed 'Dalmatia', and *Illyricum inferius*, renamed 'Pannonia', sometime in the early/mid-1st century AD, was inhabited by a heterogeneous indigenous population that had no joint sense of 'Illyrianness', 'Dalmatianess' or 'Pannonianess' in pre-Roman times. The Romans borrowed the term *Illyris*, earlier applied by the Greeks to their western, non-Greek, neighbours, which they called *Illyrioi*, and extended it gradually to the space that stretched all the way between the Alps, Adriatic and Danube.¹⁰ It gave birth to a Roman colonial stereotyping of the population as 'Illyrici', although it would soon give way to their view as 'Dalmatians' or 'Pannonians'.¹¹ The changing perceptions of what Illyricum was reflected the wider changes in the Roman cognitive geography and Roman geo-political discourse of the late Republic and early Principate, which resulted in similar and contemporary examples of Roman colonial constructions of the newly created political regions in temperate Europe, such as, for example, Gaul, Germany or Britain.¹²

After the conquest, the indigenous population was divided by the Roman authorities into peregrine *civitates*, which were apparently organised on a regional and 'ethnic' basis, based on pre-Roman identities.¹³ However, we need to be careful about assuming by default that every peregrine *civitas* in Roman Dalmatia and Pannonia accurately represented pre-Roman cultural, 'ethnic' and/or political structures, or that it always reflected a shared common identity of the indigenous population. It also should not be assumed that the group identities mentioned in the process of Roman political integration of the region, such as, for example, the 'Delmatae', 'Iapodes' or 'Daesitiates', represented a direct continuance of the pre-existing unified political or 'ethnic' units. The Romans were practical in their imposition of political solutions, and their administrators mixed and matched the administrative arrangement of the conquered indigenous population as it suited their current political aims. The more powerful indigenous political alliances who opposed the Roman conquest, were known in the sources as the 'Delmatae' in Dalmatia, or the 'Breuci' in Pannonia, were broken into smaller parts and restructured in this process.

¹⁰ Summarised in Šašel Kos 2005: 219–44.

¹¹ Dzino 2008a: 174–5.

¹² For the construction of Gaul, see Krebs 2006; Germany: Lund 1990; O'Gorman 1993; Britain: Stewart 1995.

¹³ Wilkes 1969: 153–191, 481–6; 2006: 573–82. Also useful is Bojanovski 1988: 75–344 in Croatian.

The *civitates* mostly reflect Roman colonial interests, their perception of indigenous ‘ethnography’, and their own ways of thinking and discourses on the Roman position in the world, not the shared identities of the indigenous population.¹⁴

The process of acculturation in Roman Illyricum resulted in the formation of different identities amongst indigenous populations; firstly, through the establishment of the administrative peregrine *civitates*, and later through the municipalisation and a more intensive interaction with Mediterranean global processes and Roman imperial ideology. The re-assessment of the concept of ‘romanisation’ in recent decades, which has criticised the earlier understanding of the process as a top-down ‘civilising’ process. Different concepts were proposed in the more recent scholarship, which emphasise acculturation and hybridisation between the templates of ‘Roman’ and ‘indigenous’, the different ways of ‘becoming Roman’ and the creation of ‘discrepant identities’ throughout the Empire, which all clearly point out that there was no uniform ‘Romanness’ and that matrices of Roman identity were accepted in different ways in different provinces of the Empire, as well as in different social strata inside those provinces.¹⁵

It is difficult today to agree with the earlier views of ‘romanisation’ in Illyricum. First, it is difficult to believe that this process resulted in the full assimilation of the indigenous population into an unsophisticated and “dull provincial culture”, as Mócsy called it.¹⁶ On the other hand, it is also difficult to see the construction of imperial-era identities in the region as a resistance to the Roman occupation only, arguing that the population of Illyricum took on board only a surface crust of Roman identity, as D. Rendić-Miočević and the majority of scholars from the region have argued.¹⁷ Rather, we should recognise that a life inside *imperium Romanum* offered the population different ways for reconstructing their existing identities inside the opportunities and possibilities offered by the Roman imperial ideology. Instead of earlier identities from pre-Roman times, the inhabitants of Illyricum formed

¹⁴ See Dench 2005: 38–92 for the Roman ethnographic genre.

¹⁵ Woolf 1998; Webster 2001; Hingley 2005; Mattingly 2004 etc.

¹⁶ Mócsy 1974: 250–63; cf. Wilkes 1992: 254–9; 2000a.

¹⁷ D. Rendić-Miočević 1989: 411 ff., recently A. Rendić-Miočević and Pedišić 2005: 415–18. The view of a ‘resistance’ of the indigenous population towards Roman rule was criticised by the most recent scholarship, see Jiménez 2008 with literature. Both frameworks require a re-assessment following Bojanovski 1988: 72–4; 345–54, and recently Dzino 2009.

different identities that existed on an ecological and regional basis, and as a result of the negotiation of their social and even individual identities, inside a basic provincial identity-framework.¹⁸

The process of 'becoming Roman' in Illyricum took different paths; it is impossible to describe them here in more detail.¹⁹ The Adriatic coast and the immediate hinterland, already open to the influences of Mediterranean 'globalisation', witnessed a rise in important cosmopolitan cities, such as Salona, Naron and Iader, which attracted noticeable immigration from Italy and other parts of the Empire. These cities represented the 'ideal' Roman city, which was a perfect template for establishing a universal imperial 'Romanness', through an imperial imagery of public spaces.²⁰ In those circumstances, the identity of the Dalmatian urban population was more in a tune with the imperial-wide construct of Roman identity, imposed through imperial structures and ideological discourses. The Dinaric region had a different path in its identity-construction. No large cosmopolitan cities arose there which were comparable to those on the coast. Only in the 2nd and 3rd centuries did they start to appear more urban, but essentially an artificial *municipii*, such as Domavia in the valley of the river Drina, or Bistue Vetus, in what is today central Bosnia, mostly as administrative centres for Roman mining, which was the chief commercial interest in the area. These municipal centres, as well as a few land-owning estates, were isolated islands of imperial Romanness in this region. The rest of the population assumed more liberal ways of accepting Roman identity. Art, religion and other archaeological material showed that the 'Romanness' of the inhabitants were in many ways an indigenous interpretation of the templates of imperial identity.²¹

Finally, the Pannonian area was strategically important for the Empire, as a frontier province; there was a significant effort by the

¹⁸ For the regional identity of Illyricum inside the Empire, see Alföldy 2004.

¹⁹ On the history and archaeology of the region see the recent works of Wilkes 2000a; 2000b. See also the old-fashioned, but still useful, work of Zotović 2002, for the eastern part of the Dalmatian province. In Croatian, see further the synthetic narrative of Matijašić 2009: 195–256.

²⁰ Cities: Whittaker 1997: 144–8; Zanker 2000; Hingley 2005: 77–87. For Dalmatian cities see Suić 1976; Wilkes 2003.

²¹ The study of indigenous influences on art of the Roman era still needs a more recent interpretation. Useful for older approaches: D. Rendić-Miočević 1984; 1989: 459–620; Cambi 1984; more recently Cambi 2002: 95–7; A. Rendić-Miočević 2004. See Šašel Kos 1999 for a comprehensive study of the indigenous religion in the Eastern Alps and north and central Adriatic.

imperial government to plant colonies and important cities grew there, such as Sirmium, Siscia, Aquincum, Emona etc., which acted as centres and strongholds of Romanness. Geography made the Pannonian plains a gateway to the Empire for a large number of 'barbarians' who lived on the imperial northern frontiers, and this required a significant employment of imperial forces, who also acted as agents for the dispersion of Roman identity. Also, it is possible to detect numerous immigrants from Italy and other parts of the Empire settling in the region. The region achieved a significant level of prosperity during the mid-Empire; from the material culture we can say that the visible acceptance of the attributes of Roman imperial identity developed in time.²²

The example of Silvanus in the religious domain illustrates well the point about the heterogeneity of identities inside Roman Illyricum throughout the different regions.²³ What is fascinating is that the representation of Silvanus varies to a significant degree when observed in different eco-geographical areas. On the coast, he is represented as a bearded male, under the influence of Greek cultural discourse exported from communities which maintained the 'Greekness' of their original settlers in the Greek colonies on the central Dalmatian islands. In the hinterland, Silvanus was represented as a young male, beardless, sometimes accompanied by a female divinity, the so-called 'Diana'; or female divinities, the so-called 'nymphs', who were also of non-Mediterranean, indigenous origins (Picture 3). In Pannonia, Silvanus was represented very similarly to the Italic Silvanus.²⁴ This might imply that there were either numerous different indigenous interpretations of the unified Roman cultural-religious template, or that the indigenous communities used the same template to represent different pre-Roman divinities in new ways. While just a snapshot into the centuries of Roman rule, this shows how regional identities developed in different directions inside the political and cultural framework of the Roman Empire.

²² Mócsy 1974: 112–338; Burns 2003: 194–247 see also the cities in Pannonia in Šašel Kos and Scherrer 2003a; 2003b.

²³ The opinions on Silvanus in Illyricum are divided. Mócsy 1974: 250–2 and Dorcey 1992: 68–75 argued that Silvanus was a standardised Roman deity which appealed to the overwhelmingly rural population, while the opinion that it was a 'romanised' indigenous divinity was most vocally argued by D. Rendić-Miočević 1989: 461–522. See the bibliography in Wilkes 1992: 259 n.7.

²⁴ Works on Silvanus in Dalmatia and Pannonia: D. Rendić-Miočević 1989: 461–522; Imamović 1977: 55–82, 312–31; A. Rendić-Miočević 2004, and most recently the dissertation of Perinić-Muratović 2007. In English the best account is Dorcey 1992, who discusses Silvanus in Illyricum throughout.



Picture 3: Silvanus from Županjac in Duvanjsko *polje*. Zemaljski Museum, Sarajevo.

Roman reorganisation of provincial spaces began the process of significant change in the region; it reconstructed the earlier regional social landscapes and in time established new regional identities in Dalmatia and Pannonia, as they did elsewhere throughout the Empire.²⁵ The evidence for the self-identification of the indigenous population within group identities inside Illyricum was rare, but outside their homeland we can see that they were identified with, and that in turn they started to identify with, the imperially constructed identities. In the early Empire, they identified with the peregrine *civitates* of their origin, and later actively participated in the construction of their Dalmatianess and Pannonianess, accepting the provincial-administrative determination as their own identity. In particular, it was visible on the tombstones of the sailors of the imperial fleets from Dalmatia and Pannonia, who mostly identified themselves as *natione Delmata*, or *natione Pannonius*, while the auxiliary soldiers identified with their *civitates* at first, but later with the cities and provinces of their origin. The communities in the diaspora preferred to identify with the Dalmatian and Pannonian identities, as, for example, did the Dalmatian community in Rome.²⁶

Illyricum in Later Antiquity

The written sources do not reveal much about the indigenous population in Illyricum in Late Antiquity – the archaeological sources will be examined more closely below, pp. 78–91. The picture is generally very complex, and reveals a number of different overlapping identities which existed in this period. The most important was the rise of new military elites, the appearance of Christianity, the construction of new elite identities in the area, as well as the formation of regional identities, which derived from the Roman colonial perception of the area, but in time were accepted by the indigenous population.

Recruitment of the indigenous population into the legions on the Pannonian *limes* which protected the Empire was the beginning of the rise of new military elite during the middle Empire, known as the

²⁵ For an Empire-wide perspective, see Ando 2000: 353–4; Keay 2001: 131–2 (Hispania); Mitchell 2000 (Asia Minor), etc.

²⁶ Auxiliary soldiers: Domić-Kunić 1988; Sailors: Domić-Kunić 1995/96; 1996; Dzino 2010b; *cives Dalmates* in Rome CIL 6.32588=2817.

²⁷ Brizzi 2004; Mócsy 1977; Wilkes 1992: 260–4. See also papers from Frézouls and Jouffroy 1998 for ‘Illyrian’ emperors. *Illyricianus* replaced the simpler terms *Illyrius*

Illyriciani.²⁷ This was the identity which formed in the units of the Roman army, composed by the soldiers who were born in the similar cultural *habitus* of Illyricum, Thrace and the Danubian lands. Through the assumption of Roman values, they developed their own specific construction of Romanness, using the ideological and identity discourse maintained in catch-phrases, such as *virtus Illyrici*, or symbols, such as the *genius exercitus Illyriciani*.²⁸ This identity-discourse originated from a wider ideological discourse represented by symbols, such as the *genius Hercules Illyricus*, the *terra Hillyrica* or the *genius portorius Illyricus*, which were not of military origins, but related to the whole Roman colonial construct of Illyricum.²⁹ The rise to a position of power for the Illyriciani began in the Severan era, during the late 2nd-early 3rd centuries. The crisis of the 3rd century and the rise of military emperors resulted in a number of Roman emperors being chosen amongst the ranks of the Illyriciani, who used their power to project their ideological discourse further. They were the ‘protectors’ of Rome and Roman values, a part of the new elites that emerged in the Roman world of later antiquity; ‘the best thing’ for the Empire, as they liked to be seen.³⁰

This specific construction of identity survived into the Christian era, which used similar identity-constructing tools, though in very different historical and ideological settings. The Christian emperors from Pannonia in the 4th century, such as Valentinian I, Valens and Gratian, drew upon the ideology of Illyrian and Pannonian virtues.³¹

and *Illyricus* and was used almost exclusively in a military context, with only a few exceptions, Kuntić-Makvić 1997. The Romans gave ethnic terms to specialised units, recruited originally from those ethnic groups; thus we have the *Mauri Illyriciani* or *Delmatae Illyriciani* for example for the cavalry units, Halsall 2007: 106–7.

²⁸ Brizzi 2004: esp. 320–3; Alföldy 2004: 217–19, cf. also Wilkes 1999 (the origins of the soldiers of legio VII) and Syme 1973 – the identity of ‘Illyrian’ emperors.

Pannonia as a *patria* also played a prominent role in the ideological discourse of the Illyriciani, e.g. *Pan. Lat.* 10[2].2.2 to Maximianus from the very late 3rd century: *Quis enim dubitat quin ... Italia quidem sit gentium domina gloriae vetustate, sed Pannonia virtute?* Cf. *Pan. Lat.* 11[3].3.8–9; *Aus. Epig.* 4.3–4 *armiferis Pannoniis*.

²⁹ AE 1948: 86 (*Hercules Illyricus*); ILug 1915 (*terra Hillyrica*); CIL 3.7434 (751) = ILS 1855 = ILBulg 441; AE 1988: 977–8; AE 1998: 1974 = IDR III 5.702 (*genius portorii Illyrici*).

³⁰ ... *optimi rei publicae fuere*, *Aur. Victor, Caes.* 39.26; Matthews 1975: 32–55; Lenski 2002: 56–61. Certainly, we cannot see the elite from military Illyricum appearing as a “united Illyrian front”, as rightly pointed in Lenski 2002: 59, for the 4th century.

³¹ See Lenski 2002: 35 ff.

The identity of the Illyriciani was strongly shown in the *Chronicle* of *comes* Marcellinus from the early 6th century, who was himself considered to be one of the Illyriciani.³² He presented the Illyriciani of his era as a military identity and the identity of the soldiers originated mostly in the eastern regions of Illyricum, which meant the prefecture of Illyricum of his era.³³ The rule of emperors Anastasius I, Justin, and Justinian, themselves risen amongst the ranks of the Illyriciani, increased the political significance of this group identity inside the eastern Empire. The reinvention of Romanness in Justinian's age gave them a new ideological impetus.³⁴ They constructed their identity as a Catholic, Latin speaking soldiery, who supported the authority of the emperor and the ideals of *Romanitas*, repositioning themselves as part of a new military elite from the Eastern Roman Empire;³⁵ in essence not much different from the Illyriciani of the pre-Christian era.

There was a new, municipal aristocracy of indigenous origins, which rose mostly in the urban centres on the Adriatic coast from the 2nd century onwards. In the hinterland of Dalmatia, the rise of provincial magnates was less detectable, mostly due to insufficient explorations and excavations of the area which constituted what are today Bosnia and Herzegovina; but even due to a lack of natural resources which would enable the accumulation of wealth. Agriculture was limited, and the otherwise rich mining resources of *metalla Illyrici* were never controlled by the indigenous elite, as in some other parts of the Empire, but with imperial-appointed personnel.³⁶

The renewed emphasis on Romanness in Justinian's era resulted in the construction of other identities in Illyricum, which defined them in opposition to this Romanness. Amory, in his seminal study of Ostrogothic identity in post-Roman Italy, pointed out that the Gothic

³² Cass., *Inst.* 1.17.2 He was probably from eastern Illyricum, from the region around Scupi (Skopje), but no hard evidence exists, Croke 2001: 21, 51–3. On the complex self-identity which Marcellinus constructed in his chronicle as a Roman Christian from Illyricum who lived in Constantinople, see Gračanin 2005a.

³³ Croke 2001: 49 saw 'Illyricianus' as an administrative identity, but all the sources he used as evidence refer to the members of the military as *exercitus Illyriciani*: Jord. *Getica* 300; Marcellinus, s. a. 479.1, 499.1, 500.2, 516.3 (*Illyriciani catholici milites* as compared with administrative *catholicos Illyrici sacerdoti*), 530; Malalas, *Chron.* 18.26 (s.a. 442); Vict. Tonn. s.a. 491.1, 518.2 (the emperors Anastasius I and Justin).

³⁴ Amory 1997: 289–91; see Maas 1992: 34–38.

³⁵ Croke 2001: 88–101.

³⁶ Wilkes 1969: 192–406, esp. 297–406. is still by far the most comprehensive English language account on the municipalisation and elites of Roman Dalmatia. See also Škegro 1999: 39–138; Dušanić 2004 for Roman mining.

identity of the 5th and 6th centuries was essentially a construct which originated in the Danubian frontier world of war bands, and that it was attractive to the frontier and military society in (what he called the 'Balkans') a wider region of Illyricum. In his opinion, the claims to a 'Gothic' identity after the disintegration of the Hunnic Empire and the end of the Western Empire were accepted and assumed as a matter of political allegiance, not ethnic identity. Those leaders who politically opposed Constantinople, such as the clan of Amali and their supporters, assumed a 'Gothic' identity in order to distance themselves from Justinian's new ideology of Romanness. Romanness was no longer acceptable for them, as the claims to Roman identity would see them as usurpers who opposed the only 'rightful' Roman emperor, Justinian.³⁷ Thus, in a way, we can see that the establishment of the Ostrogothic kingdom, and the Gothic wars of Justinian, set a historical and political framework for the construction of Roman and Gothic identity in opposition to one another, and that both identities carried a significant attraction to the parts of the population of Illyricum which identified with one or the other. The abandonment of political allegiances to Rome was not a novelty in Illyricum and St. Jerome complained about the Pannonians casting lots with the 'barbarians' and fighting against Rome in 406. The Pannonian-born Martin of Braga, more than a century and a half later, placed a 'Pannonian' on the random list of 'barbarians' who converted to Christianity in a poem dedicated to St. Martin of Tours.³⁸

As stated earlier, Dalmatian identity was originally developed earlier, inside the Roman province of Dalmatia. It was also noticeable that late antique Roman administrative reorganisations brought a changing understanding of space, which divided the former Roman provinces into regions called *patriae*. The *patriae* and their *civitates* became the basis for the late antique territorial understanding of the world, as visible in the *Ravenna Cosmography* written in c. 7th century, which divided Roman Illyricum into *patriae*: Liburnia Tarsaticensis, Dalmatia, Pannoniae (Superior, Inferior, and Valeria) and Illyricum

³⁷ Amory 1997: 277–313. Thus, the inverse identity of *comes* Marcellinus can be seen in Jordanes, a Greek- and Latin- speaking Goth from Moesia, in service to the Roman Empire, cf. Amory 1997: 298–9; Croke 1987: 118–20.

³⁸ Hieronym. *Ep.* 123.16; *In Basilica* l. 13.

³⁹ *Cosmographia* 4.15–22; Čaće 1993 on the 'small' *patria* Dalmatia in the *Cosmography*. The Geographer from Ravenna did not present a consistent geography, as Čaće rightly warned; Čaće 1993: 347–8.

(Map 1).³⁹ The designation *natione Delmata*, which denoted someone whose *patria* was Dalmatia, was alive in the later period; for example, Pope John IV in the 7th century, but also Damianus, the archbishop of Ravenna in the 7th century, see below, p. 158.⁴⁰

The process of 'becoming Roman' in early imperial Illyricum continued along with the Christianisation which took different forms relating to regional circumstances. The most significant centres of early Christianity were, without doubt, the capital of Dalmatia – Salona, where the metropolitan see was formed as early as the 4th century, and Sirmium in Pannonia.⁴¹ The relatively early development of cosmopolitan Christianity in Salona played a significant role in the spread of the new religion and religious identity in the wider region, especially visible in the Manastirine cemetery complex, where the Salonitan bishop and martyr and later saint, Domnius was buried.⁴² It was very likely that a global Christian identity in the cities of the eastern Adriatic coast, such as Salona, Iader, Parentium, etc. replaced, or co-existed with, the earlier templates of Roman identity in the 5th and 6th centuries, as elsewhere in the Roman world.⁴³ From the evidence, mainly material and epigraphic, it seems certain that the process of Christianisation was fully accomplished in Salona and most of its *ager* in the 6th century. Around the same time, the process was completed in Iader and its surroundings.⁴⁴ The ecclesiastic structure appeared to be well organised on the Eastern Adriatic littoral and islands; the 6th century dioceses have been attested in Risinium (Risan), Epidaurum, Naron, Muccur (probably Makarska), Scardona, Iader, Arba, Curicum, Apsorsus, Pola and Parentium.

⁴⁰ Pope John IV was said in the *Liber Pontificalis* to be of *natione Delmata*. The term '*Dalmatini*' could be seen as *cives patria Dalmatia*. They might represent an equivalent to the Britons, i.e. Cymry, which derived from late antique *cumbrogi* – fellow countrymen, Snyder 1998: 50–80.

⁴¹ See Bratož 1986; Chevalier 1995: 22–3, and recently Živković 2004: 33–44 on the ecclesiastic structure in late Roman Illyricum and Dalmatia.

⁴² There are numerous studies on Christianity in Salona, from Dyggve 1951, to the more recent synthetic works of Marin 1988; 1994a; 1994b; and the comprehensive treatment of the Manastirine complex in Duval and Marin 2000. Significant archaeological works of the last decades have improved knowledge of Salonitan Christianity, see Mardešić 2006. See also Cambi 2002: 208 ff. and especially Chevalier 1995; 1996a as the most comprehensive exploration of Christian architecture for the Dalmatian province outside Salona.

⁴³ Greatrex 2000.

⁴⁴ Gaultier 2006: 258 ff. (Salona); Vežić 2005: 79–111 (Iader).

We must bear in mind that Christianity did not represent a monolithic cultural or religious block. There were striking differences between the two Dalmatian Christian centres, Iader and Salona, in the sacral architecture, liturgy, cults of the saints, and interior decoration of the churches. Iader maintained close ties with Aquileia and Northern Italy, while Salonitan Christianity was under the direct influence of the Eastern Mediterranean, thanks to a large community of immigrants from the East. This is most visible in the architectural plans of the so-called double basilicas. The architecture of the Iaderan basilicas influenced the sacral architecture on the north Adriatic islands in the gulf of Kvarner, as well as the Iaderan hinterland in the Ravni Kotari, which presented a very distinctive architectural sub-type. The Salonitan type of basilica was similar to the Iaderan, with differences in emphasis on the sanctuary and *narthex* (church entrance and lobby), reflecting the liturgical differences between Iader and Salona. The Salonitan type was found on the coast and islands south of Trogir. The so-called Naronitan, or Dalmatian-Norican type, was different from Salona and Iader. It was characterised by single-nave buildings, having a *naos* (central area), large *narthex* and lateral additions. There were distinctively rural, smaller churches, which encompassed the whole Dinaric area, coming near the coast at the Sinjsko *polje* and Bilice near the river Krka.⁴⁵

However, the Christianisation of the hinterland did not produce the same results as the Christianisation of the littoral. Christianity needed some time to spread to the hinterland of Dalmatia, which became more visibly Christianised only in the mid-6th century. There is no doubt that Christianisation in the hinterland took firmer roots in later antiquity, as evidenced in Christian buildings and artefacts, mostly from the 5th and 6th centuries, and elaborate ecclesiastic structures in the coastal area and its immediate hinterland.⁴⁶ However, it seems that it was a specific kind of Christianity. Some archaeological evidence

⁴⁵ Migotti 1991/92 (differences of Christianity in Salona and Iader); Uglešić 2002; Vežić 2005 (early Christian architecture in Iader and its surroundings); Cambi 2002: 223–33, esp. 232–3; Chevalier 1995; 1996a; Migotti 1992b; 1995; Cvijanović 2006 (architecture and typology of Dalmatian basilicas). Migotti 1991/92: 170, 179 assumed that the specific architectural sub-type developed in the Ravni Kotari was due to Ostrogothic influences. It was also due to their rural character, linking it with the churches in the hinterland.

⁴⁶ For the Christian archaeology and architecture of the Dalmatian hinterland, see Chevalier 1995; 1996a; 1996b; Basler 1972; 1990; 1993; Paškvalin 2003. See also the corrections in the dating of some churches through the objects found there in Marijanović 1990.

suggests that Christianity in the hinterland developed into a more syncretistic form of worship under the influence of indigenous beliefs and art forms.⁴⁷ Good examples were pluteus from Gala, the altar screen fragments from Zmijavci near Imotski and the pillar of an altar scene from Grabovac, the hinterland of Omiš, from Late Antiquity, showing indigenous art and cultural influences on Christian iconography. They show some stylistic similarities with the reliefs from Dalmatian interior, such as those from late antique churches Bilimišće near Zenica, Mali Mošunj (Kalvarija) near Travnik and Dabravine-Breza near Visoko, which are more difficult to date.⁴⁸ The Christians there did not show their identity through burial practices in the same way as those on the coast, or in the large Dalmatian cities, such as the Salonitan cemeteries of Manastirine, Marusinac or Kapljuč. They used vaulted tombs (sarcophagi were also recorded, but rarely), and the majority of late antique burials are located close to the basilicas, as in urban cemeteries, but Christian symbolism or iconography is rarely recorded in those burials.⁴⁹ The ecclesiastic structures were insufficiently developed in the hinterland, and their reconstruction is far from definite. The recent state of the research has located only around 25% of non-Salonitan churches outside the coast and immediate hinterland.⁵⁰ The Acts of the Salonitan church synods from 530 and 533, if accepted as accurate,⁵¹ attest to the existence of the hinterland bishoprics of Baloie (Šipovo?)⁵², Mactaritanum-Martaritanum (not located, assumed to be region of Mostar),⁵³ and Bistues (Central Bosnia) in 530.⁵⁴ In the Acts

⁴⁷ E. g., Gabričević 1987: 278–314 – discussed in more length below, pp. 136–46.

⁴⁸ Milošević 1990a: 354–5; Cambi 2002: 279–81; Jarak 2005: 308–11. See also Basler 1972: 153–62; 1990: 83–116 and Gabričević 1987: 278–314. Dating of some of these reliefs should be taken with caution – Milošević 1996: 14; 2004: 262 n. 65 dates quite convincingly the pluteus from Gala into the 8th century. For the debate on the dating of the reliefs from Dalmatian interior see below, pp. 145–6.

⁴⁹ Paškvalin 2003: 92–4, 110–25. Late antique burials and early Christian identities in the Dalmatian hinterland remain an insufficiently researched field. Paškvalin assumed that the appearance of vaulted tombs in the late 4th century should be ascribed to the spread of Christianity, and its cessation to the period of the Ostrogothic kingdom (late 5th/early 6th century) and wide-spread poverty, cf. Nikolajević 1969.

⁵⁰ The data gathered using Chevalier 1996a: Maps I, III and V.

⁵¹ HSM 5(76–85). *Historia Salonitana Maior* is an extended version of the HS, and the historicity of the Synods is disputed (e.g. Babić 1993: 33–5), although most scholars have accepted its essential authenticity, see Prozorov 2000; Matijević-Sokol 2003: 66–8; Kuntić-Makvić 1998 and Dodig and Škegro 2008.

⁵² HSM 5(81) Škegro 2007d.

⁵³ HSM 5(81); Chevalier 1995: 22–3, 25, questioned by Vučić 2005.

⁵⁴ HSM 5(81), (84–5); Škegro 2005a.

from the 533 Synod, the Martaritane bishopric was not mentioned; however, previously unmentioned bishoprics in Sarsenterum (not located, assumed to be either Aržan, Konjic, Mostar or the area eastern of river Neretva), Muccur (Makarska but extended inland) and Ludrum (Knin?) appear.⁵⁵

Not many personal narratives from this area have survived. The most significant exception is Saint Jerome. He was born to a rich land-owning family from Stridon, a town on the border of Dalmatia and Pannonia, which has never been located with certainty by researchers.⁵⁶ St. Jerome's identity was overwhelmingly Roman and Christian. However, some of his writings show the existence of different identity-construction narratives in the Dalmatian hinterland. He mentioned that the term for beer in the provinces of Pannonia and Dalmatia was in a 'barbarian' language, *sabaia*. From the historian Ammianus Marcellinus we know that the emperor Valens, born in Cibalae (Vinkovci) in southern Pannonia, was called *sabaiarius* and that *sabaia* was the drink of choice for Pannonians.⁵⁷ Jerome constructed his identity through his perceptions of Romanness, such as, for example, the 'purity' of language (*latina eruditio*), which he recommended to his parents for the upbringing of his sister Leta. Also, his complaints about rusticity in his *patria* show the way Jerome was defining his identity through his class, rather than through regional identity.⁵⁸ The purity of language and difference from those things Jerome perceived as 'rusticity' in his homeland were social strategies used to distinguish the identity of his class, rather than to point out different ethnic narratives. In order to self-define the social position of his family, Jerome showed that a part of the population from his *patria* used 'barbarian' words; he distanced himself from them, considering them to be barbarian and rustic.

⁵⁵ HSM 5(83–5). Škegro 2007b (Ludrum); 2008 (Muccur); Puljić and Škegro 2006 (Sarsenterum). Vučić 2005 argued that the new dioceses of Muccur and Sarsenterum (which he located around modern Mostar) were formed from the Naronitan diocese. It seems that there was no bishopric in Delminium, as previously thought. This was argued in Škegro 2007a – but see the criticism of his argument in Periša 2009, who strongly argues in favour of the historicity of this bishopry.

⁵⁶ Hieronym. *De vir. Ill.* 135. Stridon was not successfully located, despite many attempts, Šanjek 2005.

⁵⁷ Hieronym. *Comm. in Isai.* 7.19: *vulgo in Dalmatiae Pannoniaque provinciis gentili barbaroque sermone appellatur sabaium*; cf. Amm. Marcel. 26.8.2. However, the 'barbarian language' that Jerome mentioned was in fact a rustic Latin from Pannonia and northern Italy, cf. Hieronym. *In Ezech.* 47D; Adams 2007: 222–3.

⁵⁸ Hieronym. *Ep.* 107.9 (*latina eruditio*); 7.5 (*rusticitas* in his *patria*).

Thus, from this brief surface overview of the identities in pre-Slavic Illyricum, we can see that identities were in a state of flux. The Iron Age indigenous population 'became Roman' in many different ways, depending on the region where they lived and the social status to which they belonged. The establishment of Roman imperial identity-discourse opened doors and enabled the construction of different discourses of Romanness inside Illyricum and Dalmatia. In Late Antiquity there existed numerous identity-discourses that we can only grasp today with the present state of evidence, which is very modest. The specific identities were formed in cosmopolitan cities such as Salona, Iader or Sirmium, but also by the new military elite from the frontiers, the municipal aristocracy in the Dinaric Alps and the ordinary people who horrified (or perhaps embarrassed) Jerome by speaking in their *sermone barbarico* and drinking *sabaia*. These identities co-existed with the identities of immigrants, whether 'barbarians' crossing the Roman *limes*, or immigrants from other parts of the Empire, such as Italy or the Eastern Mediterranean. They all incorporated their peculiar interpretation of 'Romanness', a regional and/or provincial identity, social identity and religious identity, which did not exclude each other and could exist at the same time.

Identity-construction in this region was transgressing, recombining and merging together indigenous traditions with outside influences, such as ancient 'globalisation' and immigration from other parts of the Mediterranean and non-Mediterranean world, with Roman imperial discourse, military elite ideology, social status, Christianity and regional identities. Some of these identities were originally imposed by the Roman 'coloniser', but ultimately accepted and acquired by the 'colonised', such as Dalmatianess, Pannonianess or the identity of the Illyriciani. It is therefore a grave error to see the indigenous population of late antique Illyricum labelled as 'romanised Illyrians', or 'non-romanised Illyrians'. It is an equal error to assume that the continuity of pre-Roman identities, such as the Liburni or Delmatae, existed in Late Antiquity throughout the centuries of Roman administration of the region. The identities changed significantly throughout the period of Roman administration; the old Iron Age identities ('Illyrian tribes') were transformed into the *civitates* affiliations of the early principate, which were in turn transformed into municipal identities, both with the agency of colonial power, but also with the acceptance of the indigenous population. The indigenous population of Late Antiquity identified with the new and overlapping identities: municipal,

provincial, regional, cosmopolitan, Christian, 'barbarian', Roman, military, etc. The immigration from the north in the period between 4th and 7th centuries, whether 'Germanic' or 'Slav', contributed to the further fragmentation of the existing identities in late Roman and post-Roman Illyricum.

4. ILLYRICUM AND DALMATIA 378–600: A VERY BRIEF OVERVIEW

The major point of the prevailing metanarrative of the ‘Slav migrations’, which completed its formation in the 19th century, was that the Slavs arrived in an ‘empty house’, the depopulated lands whose inhabitants were either exterminated or displaced due to the period of migrations in the last centuries of the Roman Empire. It is necessary at this point to give a basic overview of the events that occurred in the region after the battle of Hadrianopolis in 378, and when the emperor Heraclius ordered a withdrawal of the Eastern Roman troops in c. 620s, for a better understanding of the political background to the social and identity transformations which took place in late- and post-Roman Illyricum and especially Dalmatia. This was a very complex period filled with events, battles and leaders, so it is difficult, if not impossible, to form a simplified narrative of the political events in western Illyricum in Late Antiquity.¹ The material record is also plentiful, especially in regard to Christian architecture and fortifications, providing important evidence for the process of social transition in Late Antiquity.

Historical narratives

The relative security of Illyricum in the period of the early to middle Roman Empire provided an opportunity for significant economical advancement of the area, especially in the Pannonia and Dalmatian littoral. However, the weakening of Roman defences on the Danubian *limes* in Late Antiquity exposed the region, in particular the Pannonian plains, to migrating groups from the north, which crossed the Danube and settled inside the Empire. Roman administrative and security structures were crumbling and the final division of the Empire after

¹ The general background to these events is covered by Halsall 2007, see also overview of current debates in Pohl 2008. A still acceptable narrative for Dalmatia and Pannonia is by Wilkes 1969: 416–38 and 1972: 382–6. A more recent general synthesis of the events in Southeastern Europe after 420 can be found in Whitby 2000 and Curta 2006: 39–69. Detailed recent regional studies of western Illyricum in Late Antiquity are found in Lippold 1996; Lotter et al. 2003: 7–30; southern Pannonia in Andrić 2002; Gračanin 2006a; 2006b; 2007a; 2007b.

the death of Emperor Theodosius I in 395 left Illyricum divided between the Eastern and Western Empire. Western Illyricum was administered by the Italian prefecture of the Western Empire, as the Diocese of Illyricum, divided into the provinces Dalmatia, Pannonia I, Pannonia II, Pannonia Valeria, Savia, Noricum Ripense and Noricum Mediterraneum. The southeastern part of the Dalmatian province was separated during Diocletian's times (c. 300) and called Praevalitana – in 395 Praevalitana became part of the Dacian diocese administered by the Eastern Empire (Map 1).² The weakening of Roman political structures and the omnipresent lack of security affected significant emigration of the Roman population from Pannonia in this period, especially in the early 5th century. Assumption by the scholarship, and the limited evidence we have at our disposal, confirms this.³ The Dalmatian hinterland and Dalmatian coastal belt were in a much better position than Pannonia, as they stood outside of the major invasion routes and the areas of intensive fighting, but certainly this region was also affected economically and politically by those events, especially with the outbreaks of plague and the wars of reconquista of Justinian's era.⁴

The defeat and death of Emperor Valens in 378 left Pannonia wide open to the wanderings of the Goths and other trans-Danubian groups; however, it does not appear that much damage was done overall, although certain cities, such as Jerome's Stridon or the city of Mursa (Osijek), were destroyed.⁵ Beginning with the uprising of the Pannonian *foederates* in 395, the crumbling of Roman structures in Pannonia was well under way, ultimately resulting in the end of Roman Pannonia, which would ultimately come with the arrival of the Huns and the establishment of their Empire under Attila in 440–453.⁶ A very significant event occurred when western Illyricum, Dalmatia and eastern Pannonia were formally transferred from the Western to the Eastern

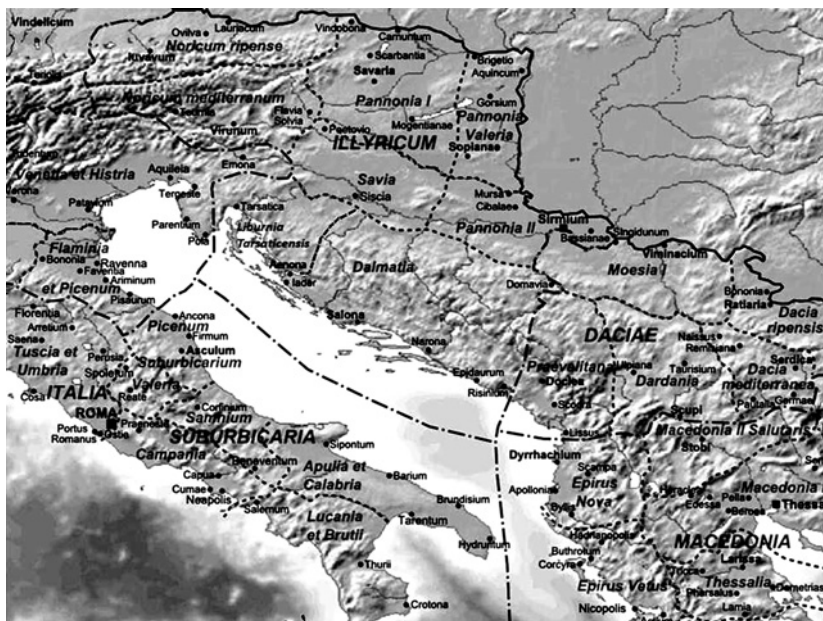
² See Weiler 1996 on late antique provincial structure of the region.

³ Wilkes 1972; Bratož 2007. For later 6th century Pannonian refugees, see the recent publication of Periša 2009: 239–42. Cf. Croke 2001: 75–6 and Gračanin 2005b: 26–7, for the emigration from the eastern part of Illyricum in the *Chronicle of comes Marcellinus*.

⁴ E.g. there was assumed to be a plague in the 3rd century, which is shown in the cemetery in Lika: D. Perkić 2002: 121–2, or Justinian's plague in the mid-6th century, Goldstein 1992: 65–7; Grmek 1998: 792–4. What the demographic impact of Justinian's plague was, is difficult to ascertain and opinions differs, see Horden 2005: 153–6.

⁵ Gračanin 2006a; Heather 1995; 2007.

⁶ Wilkes 1972: 385–6, cf. Heather 1995 for the Hunnic domination, as well as Gračanin 2006b; 2007a: 86–90 for the Huns in southern Pannonia.



Map 1: Late Roman administrative structure in Illyricum: praefectures and provinces, with the addition of Liburnia Tarsaticensis, probably formed during the Ostrogothic rule (490–535).

Empire in 437, although the Eastern Empire controlled Salona and probably the whole of Dalmatia from earlier times.⁷ The anarchic 5th century gave an opportunity to warlords such as Marcellinus and Iulius Nepos, to establish their powerbase in Dalmatia, in particular to count (*comes*) Marcellinus, who ruled Dalmatia in 461–468, most of the time as a fully independent political entity.⁸ Some scholars have assumed that Marcellinus and his nephew Iulius Nepos were both of Dalmatian origins, but no hard evidence exists for this claim, except for the assumption that he chose Dalmatia as his power-base because it was his homeland (*patria*). There is also some onomastic evidence for the Nepos family, which might suggest that they were of Salonitan origins.⁹

⁷ Cassiodorus, *Var.* 11.1.9; Iordanes, *Rom.* 329.

⁸ Kulikowski 2002 reread the sources and showed that Marcellinus was not *magister militum Dalmatiae*, but rather a fully independent warlord, recognised as patrician only just before his assassination. See also MacGeorge 2002: 15–67, and earlier Nikolanci 1985 for the alternative view that Marcellinus was an autonomous warlord of the Eastern Empire.

⁹ Strongly implied by MacGeorge 2002: 42, 294, but no decisive evidence exists.

The Ostrogothic kingdom of Theoderic and his successors took possession of western Illyricum after the Western Roman Empire ceased to exist. The Ostrogoths administered Illyricum after 493 through magistrates known as the *comes Dalmatiarum et Saviae* who were based in Salona. Their jurisdiction encompassed Roman Dalmatia and parts of Pannonia. As in Ostrogothic Italy, this was a period of economic recovery, and it does not appear that the Ostrogoths introduced significant political or social changes to the region.¹⁰ These were also great times for the flourishing of Roman Christianity in the coastal Dalmatian cities;¹¹ the control of the Ostrogothic kings stretched deep into the Dinaric Alps where they tried to secure mining resources.¹² The Eastern Romans took away the provinces of Dalmatia and Savia from the Ostrogothic kingdom in 536/537, as a result of Justinian's successful blitzkrieg in the initial phases of the Gothic wars. After the conquest, the east Adriatic coast became an area of crucial strategic importance for the Eastern Roman army and navy for their operations against the Ostrogoths in Italy. The (re)conquest resulted in a strong renewal of the material elements of Romanness in Dalmatia, especially visible in the rebuilding of the Dalmatian cities, and the fortification of imperial lines of communication in the eastern Adriatic.¹³

Significant changes occurred in Pannonia at this time. The imperial forces needed help to hold Pannonia, so the Langobards (Lombards) who already controlled parts of Pannonia were formally allowed to settle there by Justinian in 526/527, and in 546 were given permission by the imperial government in Constantinople to administer Norican and the Pannonian cities. However, they soon departed for Italy when invited by the Eastern Roman commander Narses in 568; this left the Pannonian plains open to the arrival of the Avars, who took Sirmium in 582, and established a political domination over Pannonia.¹⁴ The Avars and 'Slavs' were noted in the 6th century in Illyricum and after the Avars took control of Sirmium they became a dominant force in

¹⁰ Wolfram 1988: 320–4; Uglešić 1990/91; Posavec 1996b. See also Schwarcz 2000 for an overview of Ostrogothic rule in the wider area of the North Adriatic and the western Balkan Peninsula and its importance on Ostrogothic-Eastern Roman relations.

¹¹ Kuntić-Makvić 1998: 1000–1.

¹² Cass. *Variae* 3.25–6. E.g. also the fortifications around modern-day Sarajevo dated to the early to mid-6th century, Basler 1972: 56; Fekeža 1990 esp. 163–6. The Ostrogothic coin finds, on the other hand, are negligible for the hinterland of Roman Dalmatia, as compared to the coast, Demo 1994: 188–9.

¹³ Goldstein 1992: 17–67; 2005a.

¹⁴ Andrić 2002: 151–63; Gračanin 2007b: 35–45; Curta 2006: 53–5.

Pannonia. There the raids by the Avars and 'Slavs' described in the sources were mostly limited to the eastern part of Illyricum, and in a few instances Istria was affected by raids, while Dalmatia was mostly spared from these new intruders see below, pp. 87–8, 94–9. The most significant political event in the region was the withdrawal of the Byzantines after c. 620 from Illyricum, although we can still assume that the Byzantine navy's presence continued in the Adriatic until the 7th century.¹⁵ There is no reason to doubt the continued political allegiances of the Dalmatian cities and Istria to Constantinople until the 9th century, as discussed below pp. 155–61. The abandonment of Illyricum by the emperor Heraclius (610–641) has been debated in the historiography and mainly attributed to the military crisis that the Empire faced on other fronts, such as by the Avars and especially Persians.¹⁶ The older historiography assumed that the 'fall' of Salona and other Dalmatian cities, apart from Iader, happened in this period, having been taken by the victorious Avar and 'Slav' armies. The events were firstly dated to the 610s, but Marović showed that if the sack of Salona ever happened, it could not happen before the 630s.¹⁷ However, no archaeological sources confirm that any violent sack of the cities in Dalmatia occurred in this period; the written sources are neither contemporary nor accurate. As a consequence of these events, it was also assumed by the mainstream historiography that the permanent settlement of the 'Slavs' and the Croats in Dalmatia began at this time, as is shown in the next two chapters.

*Late antique material culture and urbanism in Dalmatia
and the eastern Adriatic coast*

Deurbanisation

There was a period of significant transition in the way of living in this region, which can be best seen through the remains of material culture. There is a noticeable change in the nature of urban life, known as the

¹⁵ Goldstein 1992: 46–8.

¹⁶ There were 13 major military crises, which Heraclius faced in his reign, according to Kaegi. He also suggested that the armies of the Balkan Peninsula were deliberately weakened by the emperor in order to avoid unrest, which would threaten him with civil war, Kaegi 2003: 300–3.

¹⁷ Marović 1984.

‘castrisation’ (or *incastellamento*) of the cities on the Adriatic coast. The process of castrisation, which is the building and rebuilding of city walls and fortifications in Dalmatian cities, but also the development of entirely new settlements, such as Hvar, Spalatum (Split) or Ragusium (Dubrovnik), began in Late Antiquity, c. late 4th/early 5th centuries which continued into the later period. From the archaeological evidence and itineraries from Late Antiquity, such as the Anonymous author from Ravenna, scholars have detected an establishment of an entirely new system of habitation in Dalmatia in that period, which reflected a lack of security and the need for the protection of the urban population. It was probably a result of the shift in communication of the axis of Aquileia-Constantinople from roads in the valleys of the Sava and Morava towards sea communication on the Eastern Adriatic coast.¹⁸ The population often chose for new settlements places around abandoned Iron Age hill forts (*gradine*, sing. *gradina*), which were positioned on easily defended positions and had building material available.¹⁹ This process was not limited to the Dalmatian coast and its immediate hinterland, it occurred in the Dinaric belt as well,²⁰ and it appeared to be rather common place in the wider region. Dunn, for example, described a similar process in Thrace and Macedonia and argued that the functions of the larger cities were shared by smaller settlements.²¹

This process predated, but was complemented by, the development of Justinian’s so-called ‘limes’ in Dalmatia in the 6th century. This was observable through numerous (a hundred or even more) fortified posts on the eastern Adriatic coast and islands, which secured Byzantine communications through the Adriatic in Justinian’s era, and even after it.²² It comprised small fortresses of 10–20 soldiers, which were able to

¹⁸ Suić 1976: 235–51; Goldstein 1992: 99–106; Čače 1993 esp. 430–1; 1995; Cambi 2002: 251–3; M. Katić 2003: 524–6. Hvar: M. Katić 1999/00; Split: Piplović 2008; Dubrovnik: Čače 1997; Žile 1997: 110–9.

¹⁹ Cambi 2002: 212, 251.

²⁰ Blagaj on Buna, Stolac, Ribnički grad-Konjic, and around forty fortified places identified between Gradiška and Glamočko *polje*, Basler 1972: 47–61, and more up to date Paškvalin 1988: 38; Špehar 2008.

²¹ Dunn 1994; Brogiolo and Gelichi 1996 (Italy); Ciglenečki 1987; 2000 (Southern Alps); Levak 2009 (Istria). See also the collection of papers in Steuer et al. 2008 for the wider context.

²² Goldstein 1992: 34–58; 1996a: 262–4; Tomićić 1998; see also Karač 1995: 291–3; 1998: 967–8. The complex of fortifications should be seen as a protection of communication rather than fortified ‘limes’, as Suić 1995 and M. Katić 2003 rightly warned.

maintain visual contact with their neighbours, linking the fortified cities on the coast.²³ The East Roman revival during Justinian's reconquista resulted in a renewed impetus for urbanisation in Dalmatia, especially in the sphere of Christian architecture, in cities such as Iader or Salona. Christian churches in Dalmatian cities from this period of Late Antiquity continued to be used through pre-Romanesque times and sometimes even into the Romanesque period.²⁴ This period can also be seen through the foundation of monastic communities within the naval communication routes, and a strong focus on the protection of already built churches and cultic places.²⁵

The cities were also starting to shrink, especially in the late 6th and early 7th century coastal Dalmatia. The falling population numbers from the wars and Justinian's plague, and also the lack of security and the inability to maintain urban structures compelled city-dwellers to look for other solutions to urban spaces. The Dalmatian cities were transformed in the 7th century, often dying out (Salona, Narona, Epidaurum), while some survived, such as Iader, and new cities arose, such as Spalatum or Ragusium. This change in the urban structures also affected the formation of post-Roman and early medieval identities in coastal Dalmatia, which will be discussed at more length below, pp. 155–61.²⁶

Earliest Row-Grave Cemeteries in Dalmatia

One of the most important changes in the archaeological record was the appearance of the row-grave cemeteries in Dalmatia, which have been excavated to various degrees. They have never received the same scholarly attention that 'Slav' and 'Old-Croat' cemeteries from the later period. The reason is probably that they were not judged to be important enough, because they could not be incorporated into national or South Slavic historical metanarratives, which began with the supposed migrations of the Slavs. Only thanks to the efforts of Vinski and Miletić as well as Volker Bierbrauer who saw these cemeteries in comparative

²³ Goldstein 2005b: 206–8.

²⁴ Rapanić 1987: 54–5.

²⁵ Zaninović 1994: 143–4, with a large bibliography in n. 41; Karač 1995: 291; 1998: 966–7.

²⁶ See Chevalier and Mardešić 2008 for the last phase of urban architecture in Salona. More literature is given on p. 156.

perspective with other 'Ostrogothic' cemeteries, we know more about them.²⁷

In Dalmatia, the earliest row-grave cemeteries are less numerous than in the neighbouring Southern Alps (modern Slovenia), or Pannonia but there are indications that there are still more unexcavated locations. These cemeteries are dated from the late 5th to early 7th centuries and vary from large cemeteries, such as the cemetery in Greblje-Knin with over 200 graves, to small cemeteries with only a few graves, such as the one in Njive-Narona. Their appearance is connected to the period of Ostrogothic rule over Dalmatia, as in several graves there have been found 'Ostrogothic' and 'Germanic' items. The earlier scholarship, working inside the 'culture-history' analytical framework, assumed that there was an existence of a symbiosis between the Ostrogoths and the indigenous population. In most of the cemeteries the 'Ostrogothic' furnished graves were positioned amongst unfurnished/poorly furnished graves, or graves with Christian symbols, which have been ascribed to the indigenous population.²⁸ The most significant cemeteries were at Greblje-Knin, Glavčurak-Kašić in Ravni Kotari, Rakovčani-Prijedor, Mihaljevići-Rajlovac near Sarajevo, Korita-Tomislavgrad near Buško Blato (earlier Korita-Duvno), and the recently excavated Njive-Narona.²⁹ It is interesting to note that the majority of these cemeteries were positioned next to cemeteries from the later period, the so-called 'Old-Croat' cemeteries (Greblje, Kašić, Mihaljevići and Korita), while the Korita graves were positioned next to the abandoned Iron Age hill fort settlement.

Usually, more than half of the graves in the individual cemeteries were unfurnished, and mostly, but not exclusively, furnished graves were female. The most popular grave-goods were decoration items, such as different types of fibulae, earrings, rings, glass beads or buttons. Other items also sometimes appear, such as small tools (small knives, needles, flints, tinders, iron nails), carpenter tools, hygienic

²⁷ Bierbrauer 1975 *passim*; 1984: 60–4; Vinski 1971: 50–61; Miletić 1978a. The most significant excavation publications are referenced below.

²⁸ Bierbrauer 1984: 60–4; Vinski 1971: 50–61; 1978; Miletić 1978a; 1988: 42–3; Uglešić 1996.

²⁹ Belošević 1968 (Glavčurak-Kašić); Vinski 1989 (Greblje-Knin); Miletić 1956; 1960/61 (Mihaljevići-Rajlovac), Marić 1969; Miletić 1978b; 1991 (Korita-Tomislavgrad); Miletić 1975 (Rakovčani-Prijedor); Buljević 1997/98 (Njive-Narona). See also Uglešić 1994/95 for the typology of 'Ostrogothic' jewellery deriving mostly from the graves in Dalmatia.

tools (sticks for ear-cleaning, combs), while finds of pottery in graves are very rare. Most of the graves were simple earth burials. However, some had simple grave architecture made of uncut stones, like Korita-Tomislavgrad or Glavčurak-Kašić, and a few burials were conducted in a more unusual manner, such as the dug out tree-trunk coffins in Rakovčani-Prijedor, covering of the deceased with a wooden plank in Greblje-Knin, or graves built with *tegulae* (roof-tiles) in Njive-Narona. As stated earlier, all cemeteries, except Korita-Tomislavgrad, had persons buried with 'Germanic' artefacts. The Korita-Tomislavgrad cemetery has recently been ascribed to the Roman Christian refugees from Pannonia from the post-Ostrogothic period. While the arrival of a certain numbers of Pannonian refugees escaping the Avars in Dalmatia is a sensible idea, the evidence that Korita-Tomislavgrad was a separate cemetery for immigrant groups from Pannonia remains very slim. In the essence it does not show any differences from the other Dalmatian row-grave cemeteries from this period, apart from the absence of 'Ostrogothic/Germanic' artefacts. It may well be that Korita-Tomislavgrad represented the next, post-Ostrogothic, phase of row-grave cemeteries when 'Germanic fibulae' were replaced with the cross-shaped fibulae as markers of social identity.³⁰ In this context it is interesting that the cemetery in Njive-Narona from the early 6th century, which existed at the same time as another cemetery, located west of the Naronitan forum, where burials have no grave-goods.³¹

The focus of the earlier archaeological research on the typology of the artefacts and the ethnicity of the deceased missed other important facts that these cemeteries revealed. The most important was that the presence of grave-goods were becoming the focus of the burials in this period, regardless whether the grave-goods were ascribed to the 'Germanic' or 'indigenous-Christian' population. The indigenous population might have easily adopted 'Ostrogothic' or 'Germanic' artefacts, such as jewellery and grave-goods, as part of a new fashion, or as gender/status-symbols.³² The use of the cross-shaped fibulae from the Salonitan, Naronitan and Iaderan workshops might have replaced 'Germanic' artefacts in certain communities as a new fashion or

³⁰ Periša 2009: 237–40. See below for the cross-shaped fibulae.

³¹ See the summary of Vinski 1971: 53–61, and Buljević 1997/98 for graves covered with the ceramic *tegulae*.

³² Vinski 1964: 107 showed that some graves attributed to the Ostrogoths should be dated after their rule in Dalmatia.

gender/status-symbol after c. mid-6th century. This is visible in their presence in the graves from Korita-Tomislavgrad, Mihaljevići-Rajlovac, and Greblje-Knin.³³ The grave assemblages in the earliest row-grave cemeteries in Dalmatia did not show an appearance of paganism either. The Korita-Tomislavgrad cemetery is dated to the later 6th century, with approximately half of the graves being furnished, and is ascribed as a whole to the Christian population.³⁴ The combination of Christian symbols and grave goods is present elsewhere. For example, female grave 29 from Mihaljevići had a small knife, fragmented fibulae of Eastern Roman origins, a necklace of glass and amber beads, and a cross-shaped pendant. A comparable example is the double female grave 41 from Ploče-Nin near the church of St. Anselmus, dated to the 7th century, with Christian symbolism (rings with crosses) combined with grave-goods, such as knives, jewellery and 4th century Roman coins.³⁵

Avoiding more substantial discussion here, it is necessary to state that the earliest row-grave cemeteries in Dalmatia corresponded with similar contemporary cemeteries in other parts of the post-Roman West. The population in Dalmatia was slower to accept the changes in burial custom from the north and the west, where the row-grave cemeteries were much more frequent. However, the period of Ostrogothic rule undoubtedly brought the first beginnings of the changes in local burial customs in Dalmatia, which continued after Justinian's reconquista. The appearance of grave-goods in post-Roman cemeteries reflected social changes; grave-goods were used in those burials in specific ways, in order to represent new ways of constructing the social and gender identity of the deceased, not to passively reflect their ethnicity.³⁶

The problem with the earliest row-grave cemeteries in Dalmatia is related to their dating. The latest datable graves from these cemeteries can loosely be dated to the late 6th and first half of the 7th century. The cut off date for their cessation is determined only through the assumption of a 'Slav' settlement which is dated c. 600–610s, in

³³ For cross-shaped fibulae in Illyricum, see Vinski 1968: 105–8, 130–40. See also the more recent publication of R. Jurić 1998; 2003a.

³⁴ Vinski 1968: 150–1; Miletić 1978b: 180.

³⁵ Mihaljevići: Miletić 1956: 13, 32; Ploče-Nin: Kolega 1996: 47; 2001b: 92. Finds from Ploče-Nin can be related to the contemporary finds in Golubić near Knin, see Bertelli et al. 2001: 270, 273, 283, and 284–285.

³⁶ A classic work on this topic is Halsall 1992a, see chapter 6 for a more detailed discussion on post-Roman row-grave cemeteries in Dalmatia.

accordance with the established metanarrative of 'Slav' migrations in Illyricum.³⁷ However, this dating is supported by an assumption based on several conjectures, not direct evidence, as will be argued more substantially later on. The questioning of the prevailing historical 'truth' that the Slavic masses 'filled the empty house' in Dalmatia in the 7th century placed these cemeteries in a very different position. Instead of seeing them as the last witnesses to antiquity, they can be seen as the 'missing link', which linked post-Justinianic Dalmatia with the earliest 'Old-Croat' cemeteries, dated c. 700–775. In fact, there were no major differences between the assemblages of early Dalmatian row-grave cemeteries and the 'Old-Croat' cemeteries, apart from the use of pottery vessels in the latter. The types of the artefacts changed in time, but the way the grave-goods were used to represent gender or social standing of the deceased remains unchanged.

The Neighbourhood of Dalmatia: Komani-Kruja and Istria

At the beginning of the 7th century, the transformation of the settlement pattern from Late Antiquity reached its final stage in Southeastern Europe. Cities and previously existing rural sites were mostly abandoned, and the population moved in easily defensible hill forts.³⁸ On the Adriatic coast there developed three separate archaeological complexes in the 7th century: Istria-North Adriatic, 'Old-Croat' culture in the central Adriatic (examined in more detail in chapter 6) and Komani-Kruja (Arbër) culture in the southeastern Adriatic, which shared certain common features, such as furnished burials and row-grave cemeteries.

Istria showed the appearance of a significant cultural continuity with Late Antiquity. It remained politically connected with the Exarchate of Ravenna, as a part of the Byzantine Empire until the late 8th century, but as a separate administrative unit. The ecclesiastic organisation was maintained by the three Episcopal sees: Tergeste, Parentium and Pola, so we can assume that the position of organised Christianity remained relatively strong there. However, the funerary habit in this period changed. From the 7th century the burials were made into row-grave cemeteries, made up of graves with stone

³⁷ E.g. Miletic 1978b: 181 dating the end of burials in Korita-Tomislavgrad only through the assumption of the Avar-Slav raid in 596/7 and subsequent taking of Salona.

³⁸ See Curta 2006: 100–10 for a wider perspective.

architecture (stone-lined graves). The appearance of furnished burials was frequently recorded, although the grave-goods were not as frequent and numerous as in the Dalmatian cemeteries of the central Adriatic. Grave-goods were gendered and consisted mostly of jewellery and small arms. Other new features were also recorded in the cemeteries, such as double burials and the appearance of charcoal, suggesting fire burning over the graves. The written sources do not report 'Slavs' in Istria until the 9th century, so the earlier Croatian archaeology and historiography was suspicious towards the possibility of 'Slav' settlement in this period, and ascribed the change in the burial custom to the 'barbarisation' of the local population and scattered groups of 'Slavs', rather than to an outside mass-scale migration, as was argued for Dalmatia.³⁹

Komani-Kruja, or Arbër culture, as it was referred to in the older Albanian literature, was named after the villages of Koman and Krujë in Albania, where significant cemeteries were discovered from the post-Roman period. The beginnings of this archaeological culture were usually dated to the late 6th/early 7th centuries,⁴⁰ lasting until the late 8th/early 9th centuries. It was characterised by the appearance of furnished burials associated with the fortified hill top settlements, and specific types of jewellery, pottery and small weapons, which were deposited as grave-goods. Stylistically, those objects showed close cultural links with the Byzantine world in its early phases, but in time developed a significant degree of originality, as a regional reinterpretation of the Byzantine matrices. Komani-Kruja was, in the earlier scholarship, mostly linked with the pre-Slavic population, which was imagined to be the ancestors of the modern Albanians in Albanian scholarship.⁴¹ More recent studies show that, as with the other

³⁹ Marušić 1969; 1987a; Evans 1989: 166–7, 181–2, 306–10, see also Curta 2006: 98–100, and most recently Levak 2007: 37–115, who argued that the 'Slavs' colonised Istria from the seventh century and emphasised the similarities between the Istrian and Dalmatian cemeteries.

⁴⁰ Nallbani 2005; 2007: 56–7 convincingly proposed a redating of the Komani-Kruja in the period from the late 5th century, to the 9th century. If she is right, it would be obvious to that the earliest row-grave cemeteries in Dalmatia and those in the Komani-Kruja reflect the same process of social change. In that way, we could see burials in Dalmatia and Komani-Kruja throughout the whole period from late 5th to the 9th century as regional interpretations of the global templates which spread in the post-Roman world.

⁴¹ The orthodox Albanian position was defined in Korkuti 1971 and more recently restated in Anamali 1993. A good recent account is given in Nallbani 2004b, see also Bowden 2003b: 195–201 and V. Popović 1984.

archaeological cultures, Komani-Kruja did not represent a specific ethnicity, especially not the 'first Albanians', but rather a specific regional expression of the change in funerary practices amongst the local population, similar to the changes in other areas of the Adriatic coast and, in a wider context – the post-Roman West.⁴² They can even be seen as soldiers under the Eastern Roman command, permanently settled with their families in small garrisons and forts, keeping watch over Via Egnatia, which stretched towards Macedonia.⁴³

The most recent studies of Komani-Kruja culture show a fascinating transition which occurred from urban to rural life in this region, which was highly relevant and comparable to the processes occurring in neighbouring post-Roman Dalmatia, as discussed in chapter 6. Cities such as Dyrrachium were slowly dying, but stayed in Byzantine hands, while rural sites started to flourish in the mountainous hinterland, with the reoccupation of Iron Age and Roman hill top fortifications. The unity of Komani-Kruja in regard to furnished burials was also segmented through difference in the funerary rites and assemblages of the grave-goods. It was even possible to recognise in the cemeteries that the responsibility for their spatial organisation, and other municipal activities, was based on kin groups.⁴⁴ The appearance of furnished burials implied the loss of Christianity, but scholars agree that Christianity was present and was signified by certain elements, such as Christian cryptograms on bronze rings. It has been suggested that Christianity was used as the ideology of the elite, while the rest of the population maintained the spiritual life which incorporated some elements of Christian beliefs and symbols.⁴⁵

The objects from the grave-assemblages from sites around the lake of Scodra and in the gulf of Boka Kotorska correspond with the rest of the Adriatic coast. While the interaction with Komani-Kruja was strongest on the Drin River and around the lake of Scodra, such as Svač near Ulcinj, the appearance of a funerary feast, fire over the

⁴² Nallbani 2004a; 2004b; Bowden 2003a; 2003b: 204–11.

⁴³ Curta 2006: 103–5. Grave furnishings and numerous weapons indicated the presence in the region of individuals with high civil and military status in the 4th and 5th centuries, Nallbani 2007: 57.

⁴⁴ See Nallbani 2004b: 36; 2007: 56 (kin groups); regionalisation of funerary customs, Nallbani 2007: 54–5.

⁴⁵ Nallbani 2007: 58–9; Bowden 2003a: 60–1, (Christianity). Nallbani 2004b: 40 (Christianity as the ideology of the elite).

graves and ‘Slav’ pottery (Ilovica in Boka Kotorska, Tvrdoš in eastern Herzegovina, Svač-Ulcinj, etc.) showed connections with the Central Adriatic complex. There is also evidence for the continued presence of specific forms of Christianity linked with the Byzantines, but is also reflected in the use of pottery vessels for wine in furnished inhumation burials.⁴⁶ The central Dalmatian coast also revealed an interaction with the Komani-Kruja culture, which might be postulated on the basis of finds of a belt-buckle and a pottery vessel from a grave in Drvenik near Makarska, and belt-buckles from graves in Ston on the Pelješac peninsula and Maklinovo-Kašić in Ravni Kotari, as well as some types of rings from Ravni Kotari. Milošević plausibly argued that the central Dalmatian coast revealed its own way of reinterpreting Komani motifs and elements into a specific sub-regional culture.⁴⁷ Finally, the most important conclusion of Milošević was that the custom of using pottery vessels in graves, which characterized the ‘Old-Croat’ graves in the Ravni Kotari and between Knin and Cetina, in fact started in Late Antiquity, as he showed with graves from the Dalmatian hinterland: Sinj (Šušanj-Lučani and Munivrane-Gale), Vrlika-Kijevo, Šamatorije-Gorica near Imotski, and Vrba-Glamoč.⁴⁸

Slavs in 6th and early 7th century Dalmatia?

The archaeology always posed a difficulty to the metanarrative of ‘Slav’ migrations in Dalmatia. The archaeological evidence for the migrant group such as the Slavs or Avars arriving in large numbers and bringing pillage and destruction to the late 6th and 7th century Dalmatia is almost non-existent. The artefacts, which earlier scholarship, using the culture-history methodological framework, connects with these invaders are very scarce and questionable, such as ‘Slav’ pottery. No written sources, apart from much later DAI and HS exist to imply or confirm

⁴⁶ Janković 2007: 19–82, 174–81. This work of Janković, while based on sound archaeological knowledge, also reached unacceptable historical interpretations regarding the Serb arrival in Illyricum, based on extreme application of outdated ‘culture-history’ methodology, which was rejected by the majority of archaeologists in Serbia and Montenegro, Jevtić 2007: 177–8.

⁴⁷ Milošević 1989; 1995; see Belošević 1980: 92 for the belt buckle in Maklinovo-Kašić and 93–5 for the rings. The finds from Drvenik are from the unpublished cemetery in the Donja Vala-Mirine locality.

⁴⁸ Milošević 1990a; 2005, although he used a ‘culture-history’ approach, which linked material culture with ethnicity.

these raids and settlement in 6th and early 7th century either. The exception might have been a vague mention of the Avar raid on Dalmatia in 597 in Theophylact Simmocat, which resulted in the sacking of the otherwise unknown place named Bonkeis, and forty unnamed fortified places. From the context of the narrative, it is possible to deduct that these events probably occurred in the north of Dalmatia.⁴⁹ In addition, pope Gregory the Great mentioned the 'Slav' raid of Istria in a worried letter to Maximus the bishop of Salona in July 600, but his latter correspondence with the region does not mention the 'Slavs' any more. Therefore, it does not appear that the 'Slav' threat was any longer a serious threat for Dalmatia.⁵⁰

Rare archaeological evidence indicates destruction and burning in the Dalmatian hinterland roughly at the same period that the 'Slav' and Avar raids were occurring. No other dating except for the framework given by the written sources and a few Avar-style arrowheads has been provided by scholarship. It is interesting that late antique fortifications in the hinterland are lacking more certain traces of destruction, only in Makljenovac near Doboj are discovered the traces of fire.⁵¹ Out of 46 churches from late antiquity covered by Basler, only Breza II, Dabravine, Klobuk-Ljubuški and Bilimišće-Zenica show traces of fire.⁵² At this time the destruction of the *municipium Baloie* located around modern Šipovo in the hinterland of Dalmatia was dated, and it is also assumed that the destruction and burning of the basilica on Rešetarica near Livno occurred around this time, but there is no supporting evidence. The mining settlement near Blagaj in the valley of the river Japra was also destroyed at the roughly same time and burning is ascribed to the same raid.⁵³

The finds of settlements from Mušići, Žabljak and Jazbine near Bijeljina in the north of Dalmatia, were cheered in the 1960s as decisive

⁴⁹ Theophylact Simocatta 7.12.1; cf. Theophanes 277.19–25 (AM 6091/AD 597) who called the place Balkes (Βάλκης). Kovačević 1966: 76 identified Bonkeis with *municipium Baloie* – see also below.

⁵⁰ Gregory, *Ep.* 10.15 (letter to the bishop of Salona); the raid is also mentioned in *Hist. Lang.* 4.24. The correspondence of Gregory the Great and other written sources on 'Slav' migrations in the 6th and 7th centuries are examined more closely on pp. 94–9 below.

⁵¹ Basler 1960.

⁵² Basler 1972: 65–135. However, Klobuk and Bilimišće show traces of basic reconstructions after the fire.

⁵³ Baloie: Bojanovski 1974: 364–5 n. 70; Rešetarica: Vrdoljak 1988: 182, dating based on assumption only, Blagaj in the valley of Japra: Basler 1975/76.

evidence confirming the earliest settlement of the 'Slavs' in the hinterland of post-Roman Dalmatia.⁵⁴ The key arguments for such claims were based on the discoveries of rough, handmade settlement pottery, which was labelled 'Slav' in the older scholarship, and few finds of oval-shaped sunken huts, also labelled 'Slav' by the excavators, in the Dalmatian hinterland.

In the ruins of the Roman villa in the locality of Mušići were found the remainders of settlement made of huts, and the presence of so-called 'Slav' pottery. Two huts were from the early post-Roman period, while another five were oval-shaped and dug into the soil. They were ascribed to the Slavs and using the typological features of the 'Slav' pottery found at the site, originally dated to the 6th century. No other evidence for more precise dating has been provided. Žabljak finds were also located in the Roman settlement; the huts were made of wood and stone and an abundance of 'Slav' pottery was found there. Jazbine appears to be a mining settlement where iron ore was processed. It had more developed types of oval-shaped huts than the previously mentioned settlements. The earliest pottery there was dated by Čremošnik to the 7th century, but the settlement showed a continuance of habitation until the mid-9th century.⁵⁵ There was also rough handmade pottery which was discovered in the ruins of the Roman villa in Mogorjelo-Čapljina, which was dated into the early period of the 'Slav migrations' and settlement.⁵⁶

Curta recently rightly doubted that the spread of 'Slav' pottery (so-called Prague types) had anything to do with the 'Slav migrations'. In fact, the fashion in the older scholarship to map 'Slav migrations' which used as evidence 'Slav' pottery types and shapes is shown as flawed, and unreliable methodology, driven by reasons related to modern political and ethnic concerns.⁵⁷ Curta also convincingly argued that Mušići pottery finds, dated by the excavator Čremošnik into the early days of the 'Slav' migrations, should not be dated before AD 700.⁵⁸ The oval-shaped sunken huts made of mud and wood, like those in Jazbine

⁵⁴ See for example Barišić 1969 who dated the massive migratory wave in the hinterland of Dalmatia immediately after 550/551.

⁵⁵ Čremošnik 1975: 91–153, esp. 101–53 (Mušići); 1975: 166–9 (Žabljak); 1977 (Jazbine).

⁵⁶ Čremošnik 1952: 255, see also Čremošnik 1949/50 for overview of 'Slav' pottery discovered in earlier period in Dalmatian hinterland.

⁵⁷ Curta 2001a: 228–34; 2001b; 2004b; 2008a, esp. 667–82 (Prague types).

⁵⁸ Curta 2001a: 234 (similarity of Mušići pottery with Late Avar assemblages).

or Mušiči, existed in Europe from Neolithic times to later medieval times, and were a reflection of the way of life and geographic and economical factors. In the context of the 6th and 7th centuries, the appearance of those sunken huts in what is today Romania, Ukraine, Moldova, Poland and Slovakia showed a shared socio-economical habitus, the world of small agricultural-based rural communities, not a migration of the 'Slavs'.⁵⁹

Written and archaeological evidence for the period of very Late Antiquity shows that the process of change and fragmentation of political power was well under way in the 5th and 6th centuries. The unity of Illyricum, forged inside the administrative infrastructures of the Roman Empire, was broken even before the Eastern Romans withdrew politically from it in the early 7th century. What the archaeology showed was that the settlement patterns changed, the economy of the post-Roman period was largely unable to maintain urban and rural structures from Roman times, therefore Roman-style settlements were transforming into small agricultural communities. The process of transition in burial custom can be traced to the appearance of the earliest row-grave cemeteries and grave-goods in Dalmatia, which were part of the transition in burial customs in the wider post-Roman world. The material evidence for the 'Slav' migrations, Avar-Slav raids and mass-scale migratory settlement in the 6th and early 7th centuries in Dalmatia is very scarce and questionable. It was developed, not by independent archaeological research, but between the needs to reconcile written sources and metanarrative of the South Slav arrival into the depopulated regions of post-Roman Illyricum, with 'culture-history' methodological framework.

⁵⁹ Čremošnik 1980: 133–4, 154 (tradition of sunken-huts). Curta 2001a: 276–310.



Map 2: Late antique sites.

* associated with the 'Slavs'

† earliest row-grave cemeteries

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Glavčurak-Kašić† | 13. Vrbe-Glamoč |
| 2. Greblje-Knin† | 14. Baloie (Šipovo) |
| 3. Vrlika-Kijevo | 15. Dobož (Žabljak*, Makljenovac) |
| 4. Sinj (Šušanj-Lučani,
Munivrane-Gale) | 16. Batkovići-Jazbine |
| 5. Imotski (Šamatorije-Gorica) | 17. Mušići* |
| 6. Narona (Njive-Podstrana) † | 18. Rakovčani-Prijedor* |
| 7. Mogorjelo* | 19. Mihaljevići-Rajlovac† |
| 8. Drvenik | 20. Korita-Tomislavgrad† |
| 9. Ston | 21. Blagaj on Japra |
| 10. Ilovica | 22. Zenica (Bilimišće, Dabrovine) |
| 11. Tvrdoš | 23. Klobuk-Ljubuški |
| 12. Svač | 24. Mali Mošunj-Travnik |

5. WRITTEN SOURCES ON THE SLAV MIGRATION IN THE 6TH AND 7TH CENTURIES IN WESTERN ILLYRICUM AND DALMATIA

This chapter will discuss at more length the written sources that are related to the Slav migrations to the western part of the Balkan Peninsula. There are three major groups of sources which should be taken into account when discussing the appearance of the earliest Croat identity. The first are the earliest sources that mention the appearance of the Slavs during the events of the 6th and the first part of the 7th century; the second are the sources which mention the appearance of the Slavs in the western parts of the Balkan Peninsula, and the last are late sources for the fall of Salona, the provincial capital of Dalmatia, including the treaty, *De Administrando Imperio* by the Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, written in the mid-10th century, which is considered to be the only more-less credible primary source that historians use as evidence for the arrival of the Croats.

When discussing events known as the ‘Slav’ migrations and the historical sources describing them, it is important to note a few often overlooked terminological problems. The term ‘early Slavs’ has caused confusion for modern perceptions of the past, because under that same term were described different groups of people, depending on the type of sources used to describe them. Archaeologically, the ‘early Slavs’ were people who used specific types of material assemblages which archaeologists associated with ‘Slavs’, such as pottery or fibulae. Linguistically, the ‘early Slavs’ were speakers of early forms of Slavic language, such as Common Slavic. Historically, they were people described as ‘Slavs’ by outside, foreign sources (Byzantine, Frankish, Arab), and there is no decisive evidence for the self-identification of ‘Slavs’ as Slavs until at least the 12th century.¹ Finally, ‘early Slavs’ was also an ethnographic term, which was related to the history of certain

¹ This statement of Curta 2001a: 350 was questioned by Fine in his review of Curta’s book (Fine 2004), quoting the example of the inscriptions of Croat duke Branimir (879–892) as *dux sclavorum* being a genuine expression of identity. These inscriptions are made by foreign outsiders, Frankish missionaries, and therefore do not represent a genuine expression of Branimir’s identity. See discussion below, pp. 198–9, and also Curta 2008b: 158–9.

folklore practices, including pre-Christian beliefs, which were regarded as 'early Slavic' (or pre-Slavic) by modern ethnographers researching peoples who speak Slavic languages in the present. What is most problematic in both popular discourse and scholarly studies until recently was the prevailing assumption that all these different groups shared the same sense of identity and the same cultural and 'genetic' ancestry.²

The metanarrative of the Croat arrival in post-Roman Dalmatia was chiefly based upon the interpretation of the existing written sources on the 'Slav' migrations, the majority of which were written in Greek, with only a few in Latin. These sources inform us that starting in the 6th century Southeastern Europe was exposed to attacks by people named 'Sclavenes', but also called, or related to, 'Antes' and 'Venethi'. From the late 6th and into the early 7th century, the Sclavenes were committing raids in alliance with the Avars and were often mentioned in the historical accounts together with them. Some of the sources were contemporaries of the events, but the majority were of a later origin, and drew upon the oral and written sources which they had at their disposal. The early sources which depicted the Slav migrations never mentioned the Croats, and the assumption about their arrival in post-Roman Illyricum is based mainly on evidence provided by the DAI, which dated their arrival during the rule of emperor Heraclius (610–640). In addition to the DAI are less reliable evidence of the fall of Salona, which is preserved in the narratives of the Spalatine archdeacon Thomas and the Chronicle of the Presbyter Diocleas.

The sources that reported on those migrations were recently scrutinised by Florin Curta.³ Although the focus of his book was based upon an examination of the archaeological evidence, he also successfully used post-structuralist approaches to the problem, in particular contextual and genre criticism of the written sources on Slav migrations. His scrutiny casts significant doubts on the ways in which these events have been seen in the scholarship, indeed, even the entire scholarly discourse on 'the Slav migrations'. Curta pointed out that a significant portion of our 'knowledge' of the Slav migration has been derived from ancient writers who described them as 'Others' from the perspective of the educated Mediterranean elite, using literary and ethnographic stereotypes of their times.

² Barford 2001: 27–34.

³ Curta 2001a: 36–73 (written sources from the period of the migrations).

“... the name ‘Sclavene’ was a purely Byzantine construct, designed to make sense of a complicated configuration of ethnies on the other side of the northern frontier of the Empire. Byzantine criteria for classifying ethnic groups were substantially different from ours. (...) It might be that ‘Sclavene’ was initially the self-designation of a particular ethnic group. In its most strictly defined sense, however, the ‘Sclavene ethnicity’ is a Byzantine invention.”⁴

This passage is sometimes misunderstood by recent Eastern European scholarship, not sufficiently familiar with post-structuralist methodologies, but also because of the mistranslation of the English word ‘invention’ as ‘fabrication’ in some Slavic languages.⁵ There is no doubt that the groups labelled ‘Slavs’ shared certain elements of a common cultural habitus, which indeed influenced outsiders, the Eastern Romans and Byzantines, to invent (construct rather than fabricate) the label for them. However, the identification of a group with a label created by an outsider has numerous historical and modern parallels, such as ‘Hispanics’ in modern day United States of America, or the switch from ‘South Slav’ to the outside imposed ‘Balkan’ identity in Southeastern Europe, in most recent times.⁶

Written sources on the migrations of the Slavs

The group known as the Sclavenes appeared in the written sources during the age of Justinian, in particular in the writings of the East Roman historian Procopius of Caesarea in his *Wars*, *Buildings*, *Anecdota* and the *Secret History*. The accounts of Procopius and other Eastern Roman authors who wrote in Greek after him used the names *Sclavenes* (*Sclavenoi/Sclabenoī* – Σκλαυηνοί/Σκλαβηνοί) and *Antes* (Ἀνταί) for these arrivals. The term *Sclavenes* was subsequently shortened into *Sclaboi* (Σκλάβοι). The *Antes* were first directly mentioned in the

⁴ Curta 2001a: 118–19, developing the ideas of Pritsak 1983: 366–424, esp. 399 ff. who regarded the ‘Slavs’ as a term for the Avar foot- and boat-soldiers. Cf. also Nichols 1993 who saw the ‘Slavs’ forming in Transdanubia, and ‘Slav’ expansion as primarily a linguistic spread. With some caution Pohl 2000 accepted Slavness as a shared cultural ‘habitus’ rather than a shared ethnicity. Pohl also saw the Avar-Slav conflict and the end of the first qaganate in 625 as key events in the process of Slav self-identification.

⁵ E.g. Gračanin 2008: 14–15; Ivanov 2008; Shuvalov 2008. See Curta 2008b: 170 for the mistranslation of the word ‘invention’ as ‘fabrication’ in Russian (a similar error was made by Gračanin in Croatian).

⁶ Curta 2008b: 159 n. 21 (identification of a group with a label imposed from the outside), Lj. Šarić 2004 (the switch from ‘South Slav’ to ‘Balkan’ identity).

record of the year 518, while the Sclavenes were first mentioned in relation to the conflicts on the lower Danube in early 530.⁷

The sources give the impression of the new arrivals on the Danube, as being nomadic 'people' who had no predecessors in the ancient ethnographies. The sources are a heterogeneous collection of writings, belonging to different genres, such as narrative history, ecclesiastic history, ethnographical observations and didactic writing, such as the *Miracula Sancti Demetrii*. Some sources were indeed using eyewitness accounts, such as the *Strategicon* of pseudo-Maurice or the *History* of Theophylact Simocatta. Some of the sources might have had some personal contact with the Sclavenes in their lifetime, such as Procopius. However, a number of authors, such as Agathias of Myrina or Menander the Protector, although contemporaries of the events, used only written accounts and did not have personal experience of the events. From Curta's analysis of the sources, it is noticeable that the Sclavenes appeared in the sources in connection with certain periods when their activities were of a significant concern for the Eastern Romans, such as in the middle of Justinian's reign (545–551), the reigns of Tiberius II and Maurice (578–602) and the first part of Heraclius' reign (610–626), while contemporary Greek-language sources have almost nothing significant to report on the Sclavenes during the mid- later 7th century, except for the localized account given in the *Miracula Sancti Demetrii*, which focused on Salonica.⁸

In the Latin sources the earliest perception of the Sclavenes was recorded in the *Getica* of Jordanes, an East Roman author of Ostrogothic identity who wrote in Constantinople. He delivered an account of their origins, locating their homeland as far as the Vistula River in modern Poland, inhabiting the swamps and forests of their 'homeland'. He mentioned three group names: the Venethi, Sclavenes and Antes. In one instance he represented the Venethi as a general name, and the Sclavenes and Antes as the most numerous of the Venethi, and in

⁷ Procop. *Wars* 7.40.5–6 (Antes); 7.14.2 (Sclavenes), The *Getae equites* in Marcellinus, s.a. 517 (also s.a. 530) was taken by some scholars to be the earliest account of the Slav raids, Gračanin 2005b: 23 n. 85. While we will probably never know who they were, Marcellinus' use of archaic terminology in his description of these raiders shows that the Sclavenes were still not constructed in Byzantine 'ethnographic' discourse during his time.

⁸ Curta 2001a: 36 ff. for the sources. See Curta 2001a: 64–119 and Živković 2000: 43–57 for the historical narratives of the events, Kovačević 1969; V. Popović 1975; 1978 for the archaeological and Fine 1983: 25–64 for the historical narrative from an earlier generation. Cf. Živković 2000: 77–81 on the absence of Slavs in 7th century sources.

another place, he saw them as three different peoples: the Venethi, Antes and Sclavenes.⁹ The Sclavenes started to be included more frequently in other western literary sources in relation to events from the very late 6th and 7th centuries. The *Chronicle* of Fredegar gave attention to the rebellion of the Sclavenes in Bohemia led by Samo in 623 against the Avars, and the subsequent conflict of Samo and the Austrasian Franks. Fredegar perceived the *Sclavenes* (*Sclauini*) and Wends (*Winidi*/*Winodi*/*Winedi*/*Venedi*) as social and political categories, related to the terms 'state' and 'ethnos', and the Slavs (*Sclau*/*Esclau*) as a geographical and loose cultural term.¹⁰ Paul the Deacon mentioned the Slavs a few times in relation to their conflicts with the Langobards. He perceived the *Sclau* as a leaderless, politically amorphous mass, incapable of political organisation. His evidence for the earliest contacts with the *Sclau* most certainly came from the abbot Secundus of Trento, and also from the Langobard experience of the Friulian march.¹¹

The information we have about the Sclavenes from this period is either concerned with military affairs, the course of their raids and the campaigns of the Eastern Roman generals, or with accounts of their ethnography. Factual reports of Slavene incursions are relevant to establish the timeline of conflicts with the Eastern Romans and their extent. Ethnographic accounts are much more difficult to assess. Mostly, they continued the ancient tradition of ethnography as a genre, which projected a set of existing stereotypes towards the 'barbarians' as 'Others', with literary parallels and literary *topoi* from the classical tradition, such as Procopius did, which was expected by the audience.¹² Paul the Deacon and Fredegar, who wrote to the same audience, were not really interested in the ethnography of the Sclavenes. They both saw the Sclavenes in conjunction with the particular literary and narrative frameworks of their times, as a 'scourge of God', the instrument

⁹ Jord. *Getica* 34–35 and 119. Procopius also mentioned that the Antes and Sclavenes used to share the same name in the past – *Sporoi* (Σπόροι), Procop. *Wars* 7.14. 29.

¹⁰ Fredegar, book 4; Curta 1997: 152–3. Authorship of this source was more recently ascribed to one person, rather than a few, Goffart 1963; Wood 1994: 359.

¹¹ On Secundus see Gardiner 1983.

¹² Cameron 1985: 218–19 on ethnographic stereotypes in Procopius; also Curta 2001a: 36 n. 1 for classical literary parallels in Procopius, and recently Gillett 2008: 402–8 for the persistence of classical perceptions of non-mediterranean peoples in Late Antiquity in 6th century.

of divine punishment.¹³ Latin sources used the term *Venethi* unlike the Greek sources, constructing a 'continuity' of the Sclavenes with the *Venedi* from the ancient geographies of Pliny the Elder and Ptolemy, who located this people in Northeastern Europe.¹⁴ The attempt of Jordanes to invent a history of the Sclavenes and to make them ancient was his own construction, based on his acceptance of the earlier authorities as an unchanged reality in his times, and the imposition of 6th-century group identities into the past.¹⁵ In a similar way, the *Chronicle* of Fredegar constructed a historical narrative of the *Wendes* and their origins. It was a part of his narrative strategy to provide the origins of the *Wendes*, who he saw as the instrument of Merovingian decline, but it was also a part of the literary genre, which expected digressions in the narrative through the sagas about the origins of particular *gentes*.¹⁶

Geographically, the overwhelming bulk of the raids, whether by Sclavenes, Antes, Avars, or joint ventures, concerned only the eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula, especially the regions bordering Moesia inferior and Thrace, sometimes raiding as far as Macedonia and Greece. The mention of Dalmatia and the western parts of the Balkan Peninsula are very sparse. Only during the years 550 and 551 were the Sclavenes mentioned raiding and wintering in Dalmatia by Procopius, after they had given up raiding towards Salonica because of the strong Byzantine forces.¹⁷ As mentioned in the previous chapter, Theophylact Simmoca mentioned Avar raid in 597 towards the Ionian gulf (the Adriatic Sea) and the sacking of the unknown place *Bonkeis* and forty forts, which were probably placed in the north of Dalmatia. The raiders were later taken easily by surprise by the Eastern Roman soldiers, who recovered the booty.¹⁸ In the same period are dated a few letters of Pope Gregory the Great relating to the region. He mentioned the Sclavenes raiding Istria in 599–600 in a letter to the Salonitan bishop Maximus from July 600, which sounds very gloomy. In particular are significant the words

¹³ Curta 1997 esp. 161–7. Book 4 of *Historia Langobardum* shows the Langobards' fall from Righteousness, Goffart 1988: 399–407.

¹⁴ Pliny, *NH* 4.97; Ptol. *Geog.* 3.5.18; Curta 1999, cf. Krahwinkler 2000: 404–13. The term is also used in *Vita Columbani* 1.27, and Fredegar, but not by Paul the Deacon.

¹⁵ *Getica* 35, 116–19; Curta 1999; 2001a: 40–3. On Jordanes and his methods of composition, see Goffart 1988: 20–111, esp. 84–96; Heather 1989.

¹⁶ Fredegar, 4.48; Curta 1997: 148–51.

¹⁷ Procop. *Wars* 7.40.31–32.

¹⁸ Theophylact Simocatta, 7.11.9–12.9; cf. Theophanes 277.19–25 (AM 6091/AD 597). See the wider perspective of this conflict between the Eastern Romans and Avars in the 590s in Pohl 1988: 143–7.

of the pope to the bishop that the Sclavenes are threatening 'you' pl. (*vobis*) i.e. Dalmatia and that the Sclavenes were already entering Italy from Istria.¹⁹ The worries of the pope were unfounded, as later correspondence revealed. The letter to Maximus from November 602 and the letters to the bishops of Iustiniana Prima and Scodra about the bishop of Docleia, as well as the letter to the Istrian bishop Firminus, all dated to March 602, do not mention Sclavene, raids or imminent danger.²⁰

Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum*, written as late as the 780s, brought up a few instances of the Slav raids. In particular, he mentioned the Langobardic invasion of Istria in 599–600, with the help of the Avars and 'Slavs' (the same one referred to by pope Gregory) and the devastation of Istria by the 'Slavs' in 610–611.²¹ He also mentioned a naval raid of the Slavs on Sipontum in 642, which belonged to the Langobard duchy of Benevento.²² However, it is difficult to believe that the raid on Sipontum was conducted without Byzantine knowledge and encouragement, as the Byzantine navy, rather than the Langobardic, still dominated the Adriatic. Thus, we can see the 'Slavs' here as mercenaries in the service of the Byzantines, rather than as a political force established on the other side of the Adriatic.²³ Finally, there is the episode with the abbot Martin, sent by Pope John IV (640–642), who was of Dalmatian origins, to buy off captured hostages from

¹⁹ Gregory, *Ep.* 10.15 and probably related to it *Ep.* 9.154 to Calinicus, the Exarch of Italy from May 599, mentioning "the news of the Sclavene victories". Those were Sclavene raids, not their settlement, and the mention of Salona in this context should be ascribed to pope's generalisations, not his accurate knowledge of the region, see Bratož 1992: 303–4.

²⁰ Gregory, *Ep.* 13.10 (to Maximinus in Salona); 12.10 (to John, the bishop of Iustiniana Prima); 12.11 (to Constantine, the bishop of Scodra); 12.13 (to Firminus, Istrian bishop from Tergeste).

²¹ *Hist. Lang.* 4.24 (599–600); *Hist. Lang.* 4.40 (610–611). Žužek 2007 recently argued that the Slavs settled the East Alps in the period just before first 'Slav' raid of Istria, dating this settlement in 595–599/600, challenging orthodox view of two migrations, smaller in c. 550 from the north by the western Slavs, and more significant after 568 when the Langobards departed to Italy from the east, as defined in Grafenauer 1964; 1970/71.

²² *Hist. Lang.* 4.44. The scholarship (e.g. Curta 2001a: 110 n. 104) implied that the Slavs crossed from the eastern coast of the Adriatic, but Deacon only stated that the Slavs came with a multitude of ships: ... *venientes Sclavi cum multitudine navium, non longe a civitate Seponto castra posuerunt*.

²³ Goldstein 1992: 46–8 put forward a strong case for the Slavs being used by the Byzantines 642, cf. Šišić 1925: 287; Živković 2007a: 215–16, contra Antoljak 1985. Both sides used 'Slavs' in the war – the Langobards attacked Cremona *cum Sclavis* 603 (in agreement with the Avar gagan) for example, *Hist. Lang.* 4.28.

the ‘pagans’. The scholarship assumed that the ‘pagans’ were Slavs who established themselves in Dalmatia, but the question of who was pagan and who was Christian in post-Roman Dalmatia is fairly complex, and will be discussed later in the book.²⁴ The existence of the papal possessions in Dalmatia (*Dalmatiarum patrimonium*) in the 6th century²⁵ might suggest that the hostages were taken from these possessions.

These sources are evidence for warfare and should not be confused with the separate issues of settlement of these trans-Danubian groups, or ‘slavisation’ of indigenous communities – these are all very distinct processes. As stated earlier, no source mentioned the Croats by the name and the evidence for the ‘Slav’ appearance, or large-scale migration in western Illyricum before the mid-7th century was very slim and related to a few raids involving the ‘Slavs’ connected mostly with Istria rather than Dalmatia. However, no source defined precisely what they meant by the labels ‘Slavs’/Sclavenes, and what was the criteria they used to define them, apart from the language they perceived as ‘Slavic’ – as Raduald, the duke of Benevento, spoke to the ‘Slavs’ “*in their own language*.”²⁶ Also, no early source mentioned the fall of Salona in the 7th century, apart from Thomas the Archdeacon, Presbyter Diocleas and the DAI. As Goldstein put it precisely: “... *if there were no later reports of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, there would be no reason to claim that the Slavs reached the Adriatic at the beginning of the 7th century.*”²⁷

*Sources on the Croat arrival: the Priest of Diocleia and Thomas
the Archdeacon of Split*

As we saw earlier, the contemporary and close to contemporary sources for the ‘Slav migrations’ in the 6th and 7th centuries were very vague about ‘Slavs’ in Dalmatia, and they did not mention the Croats who

²⁴ LP LXXIII: *a gentibus*, cf. *Bern. Chron.* s.a. 641: *a barbaris*. ‘Pagans’ as ‘Slavs’ appeared much later, in the HS 8(44), or ‘Huns’ in *Danduli Chron.* 6.7.13, a century after. Thomas was followed by most historians, e.g. Šišić 1925: 283–6; Antoljak 1992a: 66–70; Budak 1994: 83, etc. contra Goldstein 1992: 78, following Klaić, who saw it as insufficient evidence for the Slav settlement (although he expressed different opinion in another place 1992: 131–2). For the redemption of the captives in this period, see Nikolajević 1974.

²⁵ Škegro 2001; 2004 suggesting that money from these estates was used to buy captives.

²⁶ *Hist. Lang.* 4.44. *Eisdem Sclavis propria illorum lingua locutus est.*

²⁷ “...*da nema kasnijih izvještaja Konstantina Porfirogeneta, ne bi se ni po čemu moglo tvrditi da su Slaveni stigli na Jadran već početkom 7. stoljeća.*”, Goldstein 1992: 77.

arrived in Dalmatia or any other part of post-Roman Illyricum. The majority of scholars believed that the Croats arrived in this period; this belief was based on the writings of the later sources, the Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (DAI) from the mid-10th century and the stories of the fall of Salona preserved in the medieval sources from Dalmatia, such as Thomas the Archdeacon's *Historia Salonitana* (HS) from the mid-13th century and the narrative of Presbyter Diocleas (the Priest of Diocleia, or in Croatian *pop Dukljanin*) in his *Chronicle*, which is also known as the *Gesta Regum Sclavorum*.

The Priest of Diocleia was either an anonymous Benedictine monk who wrote his *Chronicle* sometime between 1142 and 1199, Gregory, the archbishop of Bar from 1172 to 1196, or, as the most recently suggested by Živković, the author of the *Chronicle* might have been Cistercian Rudger (Rüdiger), the archbishop of Bar from 1299 to 1301. The work has survived in two different editions and the translations differ slightly. There is the Latin edition (L), which is a translation of the alleged, but never confirmed, Slavic original, and the Italian translation of the Latin, as well as the Croatian edition (CR) and its Latin translation. The *Chronicle* can be divided into three parts: *Libellus Gothorum*, the legend of St. Vladimir of Diocleia and the *annales* of the Dioclean dynasty from the 11th and 12th centuries. Its value for modern historiography varies significantly, from distorted memories on Late Antiquity and the Ostrogothic kingdom, through to the unhistorical legends of the 'kings of the Slavs', and finally the more reliable accounts closer to Diocleas' own times.²⁸

The earliest part of this work, known as the *Libellus Gothorum*, was a narrative of Late Antiquity, which ascribed the term 'Goths' to all foreigners in Illyricum, heretics (as the Goths were the followers of the Arian 'heresy') and migrants from Late Antiquity, including the Avars and 'Slavs'.²⁹ The identification of the Slavs with Goths in Diocleas, and later by Thomas the Archdeacon, can be easily explained if we take into account the ongoing dispute between the Latin church and their perception of the Slavophone service as heretical, in the time of pope Gregory VII in the later 11th century. The Goths, as a generalizing group name for all migrants in Late Antiquity, was probably first used by Adam of Paris in the 1080s in his, now lost, *lives of St. Domnius* and

²⁸ Šišić 1928, see also Mošin 1950; Klaić 1971: 17–22; Perićić 1991, also recently Živković 1997b; and especially 2009b. Diocleas L, *Prooemium* (2/19–21) claims to be the translation from the Slavic original.

²⁹ Diocleas, L, 5 (24/18), cf. L, *Prooemium* (2/16–19) *Gothi qui et Sclavi*.

St. Anastasius, written on request of Laurentius, the Archbishop of Spalatum from the existing legends.³⁰ For us, it is interesting that Diocleas mentioned the story of the fall of Salona. He presented the fall of Salona in two stages, the battle and defeat of the legendary 'king of Dalmatia' and 'king of Histria' by the Goths, and the fall of Salona and other ancient cities, such as Delminium, Naronia and Scardona in the Croatian edition.³¹ It is generally accepted that the work Diocleas presented has no value for the earliest Croat history.

Thomas was the Archdeacon of Spalatum (1200/01–1268), who wrote his work *Historia Salonitana*, in the mid-13th century. The main purpose of this work was to present a history of the church in Spalatum and to justify medieval Spalatum as the legal and just heir of the ancient metropolitan see of Salona. The work consists of three parts: Salonitan history, the early ecclesiastic period in Spalatum, and the narrative of Thomas' own times. His HS is what Ivić sensibly called, "*a master-narrative of the history of Spalatin arch-bishopry*", a part of the medieval *gesta episcoporum* genre, a chronicle which legitimizes the position of a particular ecclesiastic structure, in this case the narrative which constructed a legitimacy for the Spalatin claims on inheritance of the Salonitan tradition as a centre of ancient Christianity.³²

In the HS Thomas projected a specific narrative defined by his times and the place where he lived. The HS frequently showed an animosity towards those groups that Thomas and his Spalatins would consider as the 'Others', in particular the Croats and Slavs. The scholarship usually regarded him as a Latin-speaking Dalmatian 'Roman', who was visibly anti-Slav and anti-Croat. Some more recent works have pointed to the complexity of the picture, which went beyond the simplified Croat/Slav vs. Roman/Latin binary opposition, and regarded Thomas' animosity towards the Croats and 'Slavs' from the hinterland as the animosity of the city-dweller towards people from the countryside,

³⁰ Radojčić 1929: 174; Mošin 1950: 19–20, 28–9; Katičić 1988: 20–1. See HS 16(74–6) for Adam of Paris. However, it seems more believable to assume that Diocleas independently compiled his 'Gothic narrative' from different ancient and medieval sources. Živković 2009b: 64–91.

³¹ The battle: Diocleas, L 2; CR 2; the fall of Roman cities: Diocleas, CR 2 (14a/21–2): *Dalma, Narun and Scharun*. See Živković 2009b: 81–95.

³² N. Ivić 1992: 74, 97–9; 2004: 130. See more recent discussions on Thomas in: Akimova 1983; Katičić 1987; N. Ivić 1992; Matijević-Sokol 2002; 2007b, the collection of works Matijević-Sokol and Perić 2004. See also the critical editions with commentaries in Russian: Akimova 1997; and English by Perić, Karbić, Matijević-Sokol and Ross-Sweeney used here. For the older scholarship, see the Italian narrative projected in Selem 1933.

rather than animosity towards a different ethnic group.³³ The discussion on his identity deserves much more attention than is available here. However, it is important for the present discussion to note that despite his origins, his identity was overwhelmingly related to the city of Spalatum, and the ‘history’ he wrote was a narrative of the Spalatin elite, who considered themselves to be the successors of the Romani from the Dalmatian cities. He projected their (and his own too) ideological discourse, representing the Spalatins as the rightful successors of the ancient Salonitans.³⁴ In his narrative the Croats and ‘Slavs’ were perceived as the ‘Others,’ prone to anger, wildness, heresy and all other barbarisms;³⁵ it was in opposition to them that the Spalatins saw and culturally defined themselves, as they “*loathed the very notion of being ruled over by the Slav*”.³⁶

Thomas’ report on the fall of Salona was a fascinating literary construction, which partly drew upon the same narrative of the past as the *Chronicle* of the Presbyter Diocleas.³⁷ In the same way as Diocleas, Thomas involved Totila and seven or eight tribes of nobles (*tribus nobilium*) called Lingones who came with the Goths from the north (Poland) into the epic events leading up to the ‘fall of Salona’. It is clear that Thomas’ narrative constructed two captures of Salona, one by Totila, the other one sometime after him by an unnamed “Gothic duke” who ruled over Dalmatia. Thomas identified the Croats with the pseudo-indigenous Curetes/Corybantes, making them mingle with the arrived Goths/Slavs. It was they who took Salona a second time in the undetermined past. The demise of Salona was well deserved in Thomas, as the invaders were in fact a divine punishment for the Salonitans who, prior to that, managed to sink too deeply into their sins.³⁸

³³ Thomas as an anti-Croat, Margetić 1994b; 2004: 14; Thomas’ animosity towards the hinterland; Klaić 1971: 22–3; 1990: 235.

³⁴ Katičić 2004, a balanced account on Thomas’ local and political identity as primarily Spalatan.

³⁵ HS 7(36–42); 21(126); 27(180); 29(190); 33(228) etc. see Margetić 2004: 14.

³⁶ HS 20(114): *Sed Spalatenses nullatenus flectebantur detestantes prorsus regimen viri Sclavigene experiri*.

³⁷ Katičić 1987: 17–22; Matijević-Sokol 2002: 238–40. See also Živković 2009b: 81–5, arguing that Diocleas used Thomas, not vice versa, as usually assumed. Thomas used written sources (*scripta*), existing legends (*relata*), and his own imagination (*opinionem sequentes conemur*), HS 7(34).

³⁸ HS 7(32–42). The Corybantes are taken from Lucan, *Phars.* 4.406–7, who made a parallel between the mythological Corybantes and the name of the island Curicum in north-eastern Adriatic. The story of the ‘Slavs’ coming from Poland to Dalmatia derives from Gallus, *Chron.* 428.28–31, cf. Živković 2009b: 101, 109.

Katičić, in his inspiring article, argued that Thomas in his ‘fall of Salona’ episode used the oldest written accounts of the Spalatin church from the later 11th century, describing the wanderings of the Salonitans and their return to Diocletian’s palace under the leadership of one Severus in his chapters 8–10, as well as a few other details from the foundation story of Spalatum.³⁹ The historicity of Severus (also called Severus Magnus by Thomas) is disputed. Katičić believes in the historicity of Severus after the note (*scheda*) mentioned by the historian Farlati from the 18th century, which originated from the inheritance left by Lucius (Lučić). Lucius himself apparently found it in the old missal (liturgical book) that belonged to his grand-uncle who rewrote it from another unnamed Spalatin chronicle. The note mentions the restoration of the church of St. Mary in Trogir, which was ascribed to an unnamed *comes*, who was the grandson of Severus Magnus, during the times of Theodosius III (715–717).⁴⁰ Regardless of whether Severus was a historical person and whether these wanderings happened and when they happened,⁴¹ it seems obvious that this story was an important part of the popular medieval tradition, especially in the central Dalmatian islands. The short work of Domnius de Chrancis from the later 14th and early 15th centuries clearly shows that the island elite on the island of Brač, to whom he himself belonged, justified their nobility through the claim to be descended from the Salonitan nobles, who settled there after the Goths took Salona during the times of Justinian.⁴²

Nevertheless, the whole ‘fall of Salona’ story, the epic wandering of the Salonitans through the Adriatic islands, and finally their settlement in Diocletian’s palace and the foundation of Spalatum, was shown to be a mere literary construct of Thomas, a way in which to explain the abandonment of Salona and the settlement of Spalatum based on the

³⁹ Katičić 1987. The fact that Thomas used these accounts does not make them relevant sources, N. Ivić 2004: 137.

⁴⁰ Farlati, *Illyricum* 4.306–7; Katičić 1987: 31–9. Lucius knew of the story, but only followed the HS without providing any additional facts, Lucius, *De Regno* 1.10.30–67. As N. Ivić 2004: 137 noticed, the fact that the count whose name is lost is a grandson of Severus is a conclusion of the original writer, not a fact.

⁴¹ These wanderings might have happened in 536, when Salona was briefly retaken from the Eastern Romans by the Ostrogothic general Gripas, Procop. *Wars* 5.7.27. Totila’s generals did not take Salona in their Dalmatian campaign 549, *Wars* 7.35.25–30.

⁴² *Braciae Descriptio* 218–19 (‘some barbarians’ took Salona during Justinian’s times). See also Vicko Prodić from the 17th century, another author from Brač, who blamed Totila for the sack of Salona, Prodić, *Cronica* 1.27–37 (234–6).

existing narratives of the past and historical memories in cities and islands on the central-Dalmatian coast.⁴³

Sources on the Croat arrival: De Administrando Imperio

Chapters 29–36 of the multiauthored text, today known as the *De Administrando Imperio*, edited by the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, is still, though cautiously, taken as relevant for the earliest identities and the arrival of the Serbs and Croats, as well as providing evidence for the existence of these identities before the 9th century, regardless of the numerous inconsistencies in the text. The most peculiar characteristic of the DAI in relation to the Croats is that it tells the story of the Croat arrival in Dalmatia in three different places: chapters 29, 30 and 31. These three stories share significant similarities, but also differences, which has intrigued and frustrated historians for centuries. The more recent historiography has rejected the strong criticism of 19th century scholarship, in particular Dümmler, Rački and Jagić, who saw the DAI as only revealing traces of the subsequent historical construction.⁴⁴ The majority of authorities have tried to show that the DAI hides some traces of historical ‘truth’ from the furthest past, rather than trying to see this work in its historical and cultural context, placing most trust in the historicity of the story from chapter 30.⁴⁵ Only relatively recently has scholarly criticism pointed out that the Croat *origo gentis* from chapter 30 of the DAI is not very helpful for the interpretation of events from the 7th or 9th centuries,⁴⁶ in the same way as the obvious political propaganda of the Byzantines in chapter 31 does not shed much light on the events.⁴⁷

⁴³ N. Ivić 2004: 133–40. For the lack of archaeological evidence for the fall of Salona, see below pp. 155–6.

⁴⁴ Šišić 1925: 243–9.

⁴⁵ See the overview of the large number of earlier opinions in Lončar 1992; Švab 1995; Ferjančić 1996 and the overview of older literature in Šišić 1925: 241–65, and F. Dvornik in R. H. J. Jenkins 1962: 94–101. The most recent comprehensive analysis of language and context is in the unpublished dissertation of Lončar 2002.

⁴⁶ Curta 2006: 137–9; Alimov 2008: 101–5. Earlier: Katičić 1985; Evans 1989: 64–85; Pohl 1995: 219–20. For the most recent attempts to restore dignity to the DAI as a source, see Lj. Maksimović 1996; Živković 2007a: 192 ff.

⁴⁷ Grafenauer 1952: 21–8; Ferjančić 1959: 37–46. It is curious that the earlier historiography rejected the story from chapter 31, but accepted the dating of the Croat and Serb migration during the rule of Heraclius from that chapter.

The story in chapter 29 tells how the Roman emperor Diocletian fell in love with Dalmatia and brought people from Rome to settle there, who were still called 'Romans' in Constantine's time (i.e. Dalmatian Romani). Diocletian founded the cities of Spalatum, half the size of Constantinople, and Diocleia. These Romani possessed Dalmatia up to the Danube; once, when crossing the river, they unexpectedly came upon the unarmed Slav people, "*who were also called Avars*", whom they took by surprise and overcame. In revenge, those Slavs captured the Roman soldiers, took their uniforms and equipment and seized Salona by surprise and trickery. The Romani dispersed throughout the coastal cities and the Slavs settled in Dalmatia, destroying the Romani dwelling in the plains and on higher ground. The story in chapter 30 reported that Dalmatia, which stretched between Dyrrachium, Istria and Danube, was one of the most illustrious provinces of the West and was ruled by the Romans, not necessarily Dalmatian Romani. The emperor Diocletian built the cities of Spalatum and Salona, which was the head of Dalmatia. The Dalmatian cavalry guarded a post on the Danube and one day crossed the river and pillaged the unprotected Avar villages, taking their women and children as prisoners. The angry Avars took their revenge in the same way as the Slavs did in chapter 29 – through capturing Dalmatian soldiers and taking their insignia in order to take Salona by trickery. After capturing Salona, the Avars settled in Dalmatia as her masters, except for the coastal towns which were held by the Romani. However, from faraway White Croatia came Croats led by five brothers and two sisters, who after some time spent in fighting, chased the Avars from Dalmatia. The Croats who stayed in White Croatia were called 'Unbaptised Croats', and were ruled by Otho, king of Francia and Bavaria. From the Croats who came to Dalmatia, a part split and took over Pannonia and Illyricum. The Dalmatian Croats finally split from the Franks and became independent. Finally, in chapter 31, we learn that the Croats originated from the White, or Unbaptised Croats, who were the first neighbours of the White/Unbaptised Serbs. They asked the emperor Heraclius for permission to settle in Dalmatia, and under his auspices they expelled the Avars who had earlier expelled the Romani. They accepted baptism from Heraclius and from those days were in submission to the Byzantine emperors.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ DAI, 29.1–53; 30.6–87; 31.1–30.

The earlier scholarship discussed the sources Constantine used for his work at length. In general, it seems that he relied heavily on the oral sources, rather than written authorities, except possibly for some abstracts of the documents from his diplomatic archives, if those documents and archives existed at all in Constantinople.⁴⁹ Recently, Živković suggested that Constantine used as a major source for his chapters on the Croats and Serbs a lost work on the conversion of the Croats and Serbs, written in Latin by an anonymous author from Rome, and influenced by the narrative pattern developed in *De conversione Bagoariorum and Carantanorum*, the work of an anonymous author from Salzburg completed in 871.⁵⁰ This assertion of Živković is rather brave and does not produce a satisfactory and coherent argument, especially in regards to the structure and purpose of the alleged work. If, for the sake of the argument, we assume that Constantine was using a Latin source for his accounts on the Croats and Serbs, it is difficult to believe that it would ascribe such important agency to the Eastern Roman emperor Heraclius as did chapters 31 and 32, not to mention the existence of different narratives of the Croat arrival in Dalmatia mentioned earlier, and discussed below.⁵¹ However, even if this hypothetical work on the conversion of the Croats and Serbs existed, which is highly doubtful, there is no evidence that it might reflect historical events from 7th century accurately.

There is loose scholarly agreement that Constantine used two different traditions for the stories of the arrival of the Croats, Byzantine records in chapters 29 and 31 written in 949/950, and the Croat *origo gentis* in chapter 30, which was apparently a later addition written probably after 955, but before 972.⁵² Whether chapter 30 was an

⁴⁹ For written sources and composition in general, cf. Bury 1906; R. H. J. Jenkins 1962: 1–8; Toynbee 1973: 599–600. Scholarship does show that even basic information after the reign of Heraclius was difficult to obtain for Byzantine historians in the 9th century, Ševčenko 1992: 287–8. Shepard 2003: 109–12 showed that Constantine VII had no extensive diplomatic archives at his disposal in Constantinople. This might be evidenced by the general fall in literacy and a curious absence of copy-manuscripts from the 6th to 9th centuries in Byzantium, Lemerle 1986: 82–4.

⁵⁰ Živković 2009a, cf. 2008: 25 n. 100.

⁵¹ Živković 2008 suggested that the term κάστρα ο.,κούμενα (*kastra oikumena*) in the DAI was used from the Latin source depicting cities, which belonged to the ecclesiastic organisation, and not simply “inhabited cities” as previously thought. The idea needs more elaboration, but is not necessarily wrong. If right, it would suggest that Constantine might have used a Latin source as well for contemporary, but not for early history, or the myths of the origins of the Croats and Serbs.

⁵² Bury 1906: 522–5, followed by later authorities, cf. Grafenauer 1952: 15–19, 28; Ferjančić 1959: 26–7. See also Živković 2006; 2007a: 194–5 who thinks that the

interpolation at all, or was written by the later author, or by Constantine himself, is difficult to prove beyond reasonable doubt, as there are many different opinions, but no decisive arguments to support either side.⁵³ Goldstein suggested that this *origo gentis* was recorded in the 10th century, not earlier, as previously thought. If true, and no evidence can be deduced beyond speculation, that would mean not only the obvious fact that there were people sharing Croat identity in the 10th century, as Fine suggested,⁵⁴ but also that their elite had a reason to maintain this story in order to justify their power. The myths of origins might be seen as a shift from simpler constructs, such as *gens*, towards a determined territory, hereditary aristocracy and a ruling dynasty, which were the basis for legitimacy.⁵⁵ If true, this speculation of Goldstein showed that in Constantine's times there existed a significant effort to manipulate the past, which was already under way in the discursive narrative of Croatness in Croatia.

Chapters 29–36, which mention the arrival of the Slavs on the Balkan Peninsula, should first be seen as parts of the whole to which they belong, with the DAI observed as the author's work rather than as a meaningless patchwork of sources. The DAI was originally intended to be a book of ethnography (Περὶ ἔθνων) of the peoples living outside the Empire, but it transformed into a didactic work, a guide for Constantine's son Romanus II.⁵⁶ Constantine did not state many of his intentions in the DAI, apart from his wish to transmit political wisdom to his son,⁵⁷ with his curiosity to classify different nations, their origins, customs, and ways of life and the influence of climate factors. It is interesting to note that he saw the Byzantine Empire as the “captain that steers and guides the laden ship of the world”, while he compared

information for Chapter 30 was collected together with the other chapters. Also that Constantine made a final copy of the DAI around 959, which still existed in the 16th century and that the existing manuscript was only a copy of his final draft.

⁵³ R. H. J. Jenkins 1962: 2, argued that chapter 30 was the source for 29 and 31 (30.2–61 for 29.3–53 and 30.61 ff. for part of 31), deriving from an imperial official from Dalmatia, while Margetić 1977: 18 ff. saw chapter 30 and cc. 29 and 31 as deriving from the same source. F. Dvornik in R. H. J. Jenkins 1962: 100 concludes that the original ethnographic narrative intended for Περὶ ἔθνων (29.3–53, 217–95; 31.3–70 etc.) was updated later. As Lončar 2002: 103–11 pointed out – there is no decisive argument that chapter 30 was separate or written later than the rest of the DAI. See also Živković 2007a: 194–5.

⁵⁴ Fine 2006: 32–3.

⁵⁵ See the recent comparative approach to the genre by Plassman 2006.

⁵⁶ R. H. J. Jenkins 1962: 1; Toynbee 1973: 581–2.

⁵⁷ DAI, 1.13 (διδάξαι).

the power of the Byzantine emperor in *De Caerimoniis* with the harmony of the universe.⁵⁸ The Byzantines, i.e., the Romans (Ῥωμαῖοι), were for Constantine the epicentre of the world, the other peoples were simply pests, hungry and insatiable, perpetually unhappy with the ‘gifts’ they received from the Romans.⁵⁹ Very rarely did he use the word ‘barbarian’. He used it indiscriminately, for the Armenians, Arabs and Slavs, which did not reflect the examples and significance of the ‘barbarian discourse’ from antiquity.⁶⁰

On one hand, we might say that Constantine perhaps intended to make an imitation (*mimesis*) of the earlier Graeco-Roman ‘ethnography’ which aimed to explain the ‘Other’, as Byzantine literature generally intended to be imitation of ancient literature. It was especially visible after the ‘Byzantine renaissance’ in the 9th century, when the Byzantines ideologically attempted to demonstrate that their culture was a ‘perfect’ continuation of antiquity.⁶¹ However, that was only a surface impression, possibly the author’s intention, or else a literary ideal. Ancient historiography and ethnography relied on the earlier tradition, which they imitated and manipulated,⁶² while Constantine did not touch on ancient historiography or ethnography in the DAI, unlike some of his other works. He did not care much for the period before Constantine the Great, placing the DAI firmly inside the Christian and Roman tradition. This is not surprising, as the emphasis on the ‘Romanness’ in imperial discourse was an important ideological feature of the other rulers from the Macedonian dynasty, as they sought to establish themselves as ‘direct’ descendants from Constantine I. Therefore, it is possible to also say that Constantine’s work belonged to the “*imperial (and dynastic) strategy that sought to draw Constantine I and Constantine VII together as close as possible.*”⁶³

The political and ideological aims of Constantine were numerous and complex. The DAI might have functioned perfectly in the framework of Byzantine political ideology of the universal Christian

⁵⁸ DAI, 1.8–10; *De Ceremoniis* 1.1–2.

⁵⁹ DAI, Προοίμιον 6–9, 17–20.

⁶⁰ DAI, 43.18 (the Armenians from Taronia); 48.5 (the Saracens); 49.32; 49.34; 49.48 (the Slavs on the Peloponnesus). See Obolensky 1994: 13 for the Byzantine concept of ‘barbarian’ that differed in part from the earlier Roman construct of ‘barbarian’.

⁶¹ Hunger 1969/70; Mango 1981: esp. 14–16; Speck 1998.

⁶² Marincola 1997.

⁶³ Markopoulos 2006: 285–9, the quote from 288, cf. Markopoulos 1994 and Đurić 1986 who recognised linguistic strategies in the DAI, which emphasised that ‘Romanness’.

Empire – *Pax Christiana*. Byzantine *oikoumene* was not binding by force, but through a delicate network of diplomacy that established *oikoumene* as a commonwealth of peoples linked to orthodox Christianity and the recognition of the political superiority of the Autocrator in Constantinopolis and the cultural domination of the Byzantines.⁶⁴ However, this prevailing opinion was recently challenged by Kaldellis. He argued that on the contrary the Byzantine Empire was the equivalent of what we would today see as a nation-state, a state of Romans with different regional identities, but the same ethnicity, thus challenging the notion of ‘multiculturalism’ of the Byzantine Empire as a modern myth. Furthermore, he also argued that the oikumenical ideology and the notion of the Byzantine ‘commonwealth’ were modern constructs and that the Byzantine Empire never entertained the idea of a world empire after Justinian. True, they were entitled to the former parts of the Empire by historical rights, but rarely pursued conquest, as conquest would require a full conversion of the conquered population to the standards of what they saw as ‘Romanness’ of the times.⁶⁵

We might say that the DAI functioned within both of these frameworks – either as ‘oecumenical’ or ‘nationalistic’. The first and most important intention of the DAI was to show that the territory of Illyricum was under the rule of the Romans in the past and accordingly the Byzantines, i.e., the Romans (Ῥωμαῖοι) had a legal, moral and political right to regard it as part of their interest-zone.⁶⁶ In the context of this political ‘manifesto’ it was understandable why the DAI saw the Slavs as arrivals and why the DAI insisted on the motif of the arrival of the Slavs from an undetermined, faraway, ‘homeland’. They were arrivals located in Illyricum in accordance with the will of Constantine’s predecessors, the Roman emperors who, as rightful rulers, settled,

⁶⁴ Obolensky 1971: 353–9; 1994: 1–22 with the most recent assessment of the concept by Shepard 2006; cf. Haldon 1986: 161–73; 1990: 348–71; Chrysos 1989: 20–1 showed how the Byzantines incorporated the Roman principle of a universal empire with Christian ideology so that instead of spreading *humanitas* (civilisation) they were spreading orthodox Christianity and the superiority of Constantinopolis over the others. See Woolf 1998: 54–60; Hingley 2005: 62–71 for the role of *humanitas* in Roman imperial ideology.

⁶⁵ Kaldellis 2007: 74–119.

⁶⁶ DAI, 29.70–4; 31.58–60; cf. Theophanes Continuatus (*Vita Basilii*) 5.52. See Chrysos 1989: 13–21 on legality in Byzantine political thought. Constantine’s mixing up of Dalmatia from his own times and Roman Dalmatia from antiquity was the consequence of relying on different sources, Lončar 1990: 391–400, but also the political discourse which saw Dalmatia in the Byzantine zone of influence, cf. Ančić 1998: 16.

baptised and chose their leaders, and only thanks to the failures of the earlier emperors the Slavs became independent.⁶⁷ Those Slavs in Illyricum belonged to a zone of Roman influence, neither Frankish nor Bulgar.⁶⁸ Constantine VII did not contemplate the reconquest of Illyricum; he only saw it as a Roman interest zone, historically and politically. In that context the DAI transgresses its significance as a source of information, it becomes a tool for imperial foreign diplomacy, nothing less than a “*document which the emperor can show when negotiating*.”⁶⁹ The political rehabilitation of Basil I, which occupied Constantine in the organisation of his literary activities, was a very significant *leitmotif* in this context, and must be taken into account as one of the significant political factors behind the DAI and recognised in the active role Constantine ascribed to Basil, especially in chapters 29 and 31–36.⁷⁰

The discussion on the use of the DAI as a source for the earliest history of the South Slavs should move from the debate of whether Constantine VII and the anonymous interpolator of chapter 30, if there was one, reported ‘truths’ or ‘lies’ in chapters 29–36. The DAI was the work of an author who was concerned with the political ideology of his state and its foreign affairs, and who had at his disposal the oral legends and diplomatic reports from his times and the most recent past. Constantine’s perception of the Slavs and their past was the perception of an outsider who did not know, nor understood, much about the ‘Other’ he was writing about. For Constantine, the inhabitants of Dalmatia and Pannonia are ‘Slavs’ in DAI, but in *Vita Basilii* – they are Scythians (Σκυθόι)!⁷¹ The DAI told us more about Constantine himself and his times than about the 7th century. He was not looking to establish a rational, linear narrative of the past, but rather he composed the work from different narratives, which fitted into his construction of the world that he was trying to represent, which did not necessarily exclude one other, but showed the different aspects of their contextual existence.

⁶⁷ DAI, 31.7–20; 32.7–30 (will of ruler); DAI, 29.70–84; 31.20–5 (baptism and choice of rulers, although, thanks to the lack of coherence/different author we can see that 30.87–90 mentioned the baptism of the Croats by the Roman bishop); DAI, 30.125–42 (regulation of relationships) DAI, 29.58–61; 29.84–7 (failures of Constantine’s predecessors).

⁶⁸ DAI, 30.79–87 (not Frankish); DAI, 31.58–67 (not Bulgar).

⁶⁹ Todorov 2008, quote from 71, see also Shepard 1997: 96–8; Curta 2008b: 163–5.

⁷⁰ DAI, 29.70 ff.; 30.125–42, see also Theophanes Continuatus (*Vita Basilii*) 5.54. See Toynbee 1973: 575, 582–98, 608.

⁷¹ Theophanes Continuatus (*Vita Basilii*) 5.52. *Vita Basilii* was also composed by a different scholars, under Constantine’s auspices and editorship.

After seeing chapters 29–36 as integral parts of the work they belong to, it is worthy to analyse the individual narratives which related to the Slav/Croat arrival in Dalmatia which were present in the DAI. There are three major narratives which might be observed: the fall of Salona from chapter 29 and 30,⁷² the Croat *origo gentis* from chapter 30 and the approval for the Croats and Serbs to settle in Illyricum by the emperor Heraclius from chapter 31.⁷³ These are certainly not the only narratives that Constantine used. The Byzantine version of the most recent past,⁷⁴ and the ethnographic and strategic/diplomatic observations from Constantine's times were also present in this patchwork of discourses in chapters 29–31, which deal with the Croats.⁷⁵

The scholarship rightly saw the story of the fall of Salona and the foundation of Spalatum from chapters 29 and 30 as part of the popular historical-cultural and identity-narratives of the Romani (Ῥωμαῖοι), the inhabitants of the Dalmatian cities under the Byzantine sovereignty who are discussed at more length on pages 155–61.⁷⁶ It appears very likely in this context that Constantine also used the foundation-stories of the Ragusians, who presented themselves as the successors of the Epidauritans.⁷⁷ Whether the DAI used written accounts, or the legends of Dalmatian Romani, is irrelevant, as they said nothing about 7th century events, but only about how 7th century events were perceived. However, although the narratives on the fall of Salona from chapters 29 and 30 appear identical at first sight,⁷⁸ there are a few differences which should be noted. The narrative of chapter 29 focused on

⁷² Lončar quite plausibly suggested that there were in fact two stories: the fall of Salona, and the story of the conquest of Dalmatia, Lončar 2002: 161–6.

⁷³ DAI, 30.61–90; 31.31–57 – different narratives, Grafenauer 1952: 20. See also 31.31–57, about the Croats never fighting outside their borders, and the arrival of pious Martin in the times of Trpimir, which also derived from Croat sources.

⁷⁴ DAI, 29.54–216; 30.120–42. – this was part of the material for the *Res Gestae* of Basil I, Constantine's grandfather, R. H. J. Jenkins 1962: 3.

⁷⁵ DAI, 29.217–95; 30.91–119; 31.58–91.

⁷⁶ DAI, 29.1–53; 30.14–61; Grafenauer 1952: 29. Cf. Bury 1906: 556–7; Ferjančić 1959: 11–12 n. 11; Budak 1995b: 76. The story of the fall of Salona was discussed earlier on in this chapter.

⁷⁷ DAI, 29.217–33, cf. different versions in the HS 8(46) and Diocleas I 26 (108/15–110/9); Katičić 1988; Živković 2007b. See also Ferjančić 1991, who argued the trustworthiness of Constantine's sources.

⁷⁸ Grafenauer 1952: 19–20, (cf. Bury 1906: 524) saw the narrative from chapter 29 as an unclear and confusing excerpt filled with Constantine's philological comments, while the narrative from chapter 30 was, in his opinion, much more elaborated and clear, reflecting what he called the, “*Dalmatian folk-tale about the fall of Salona*”.

Dalmatian Romani and their cities, it saw them as owners of the land and soldiers, and provides their *origo gentis* – the Romani arrived with Diocletian from Rome. Salona was half the size of Constantinople and Diocletian's palace in Spalatum was presented as an architectural splendour of the past.⁷⁹ The chapter 30 narrative focused more on Dalmatia and the Dalmatians. Dalmatia was the most beautiful province of the West, it was ruled by the Romans, but the Dalmatians were the soldiers and Salona was the head of the province. It is also interesting to note that the enemies in chapter 29 were the Slavs/Avars, and in chapter 30 the Avars, who were defeated by the Croats.⁸⁰

The story of the arrival of the Croats and Serbs from 'White Croatia' or 'White Serbia' is nothing more than a way to explain and rationalise the social and cultural change through a misinterpretation of the events from Late Antiquity.⁸¹ The narrative is no different from the obviously fictive story that Diocletian founded Diocleia, or that he instigated the Roman colonisation of Dalmatia, which was the *origo gentis* of the Dalmatian Romani.⁸² If Constantine indeed used the existing *origo gentis* of the Croats in chapter 30, we cannot see it as realistic,⁸³ or even original, especially because an almost identical myth of the arrival of the Bulgars was mentioned in Theophanes the Confessor, as well as the patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople. It might even be argued that the name of the leader from the Bulgar *origo gentis* Kouvratos/Kobratos from Theophanes and Nicephorus, or Kouber the Bulgar, the archont who rebelled against the Avars in the 670s, from the *Miracula Sancti Demetrii*, inspired Constantine to link this story with the Croats and their eponymous leader Chrobato.⁸⁴ Other similar examples of peoples arriving from their 'faraway homelands' in the DAI and the

⁷⁹ See the comparative analysis of the *Gesta Diocletiani*, as a base for the *origo gentis* of Dalmatian Romani in the DAI and in the HS by Lončar 2002: 118–32.

⁸⁰ Ferjančić 1959: 29 n. 78 also saw these two narratives as different.

⁸¹ DAI, 13.7–8; 30.63–4; 31.86–91; 32.5; Curta 2006: 138–9; cf. Evans 1989: 66, 71–7. In the late 19th century Rački and Jagić argued against a separate migration of the Croats and Serbs from their northern 'homelands' and saw White Croatia as a myth, but in the context of their anti-Habsburg, panslavist and pro-Yugoslav political views of the period, e.g. Jagić 1895.

⁸² DAI, 29.3–14; 31.11–15; 35.

⁸³ Usually Constantine provides the reasons for migration. For the Croat and Serb migration he provides no reason whatsoever, Lončar 2002: 329–330.

⁸⁴ Theophanes, 357–60 (AM 6171/AD 679/80); Nicephorus, 22.1; 35.5 ff.; *Miracula Sancti Demetrii* 2.5 (§286–306); Pohl 1985; 1988: 270 ff.; Budak 1994: 68–9 cf. Klaić 1990: 23–4. Kouvratos/Kobratos and Kouber are not the same person, Grafenauer 1952: 45–9; Lemerle 1981: 143–5; Fine 1983: 48–9 etc.

Byzantine literary tradition are also very problematic. For example, the Great Moravia, mentioned by Constantine, never existed. He only projected a history of tradition, rather than a history of events.⁸⁵

The earlier historiography was open towards this possibility of White Croatia in the north. However, it stood on patchy and disputable sources. The White Croats were mentioned only once, in the Russian *Primary* (Nestor's) *Chronicle*, together with the Serbs and Carantanians (Хорутане), implying that they had already migrated south from the mythical 'Slav homeland' located in Pannonia and Thrace by the *Chronicle*. The *Chronicle* also referred to the people of the same name, located in Galicia (western Ukraine), as an ally of the Pechenegs and the enemy of the Kievan Rus in the late 10th century, but it also mentioned the war of the actual Croat kingdom with the Bulgars.⁸⁶ In conjunction with some other 10th and 11th century sources, such as King Alfred's Horigti/Horihti/Horoti,⁸⁷ the people Chorwatin and place Jrvab, Khurdab or Jrvat mentioned by Persian and Arab geographers, and the chapter giving privileges to the archbishopry of Prague from 1086, which mentioned certain Chrouuati around Kraków, has led some scholars to declare the Croat homeland in the north as a 'certainty'.⁸⁸ However, as Evans pointed out, even if we accepted the existence of White or Eastern Croatia in the 10th century, it is difficult to prove that the Croats in Dalmatia came from there. To elaborate upon this thought – even if from this patchy evidence we accept that there were another people named the Croats or in name similar to Croats in Eastern or Northeastern Europe, they most certainly had nothing to do with the Croats in Dalmatia.⁸⁹

The *origo gentis* of the Croats, as presented in chapter 30 of the DAI, was deeply embedded inside Byzantine political ideology, as it divided

⁸⁵ DAI, 13.5; 38.58; esp. 40.32–34; Wolfram 1989; cf. Pohl 1995: 221–2.

⁸⁶ *Prim. Chron.* 6.5: Хървати Бълии. There was also the eastern Хървати located in Galicia: *Prim. Chron.* 12.24, 29.23, 122.8, for the years 907 and 992 when conquered by the Kievan prince Vladimir. There was also a reference to the war of the Croat kingdom with the Bulgars: *Prim. Chron.* 45.10 confirmed in DAI 30.60–4; 32.126–8. The *Primary Chronicle* should not be taken too seriously as evidence, as it provides an ethnographic *origo gentis* for the eastern Slavs, Tolochko 2008.

⁸⁷ OE Orosius, 1.1 (13/11–12), the name differs in different manuscripts, see Bately 1980: 173.

⁸⁸ Hauptmann 1924; Grafenauer 1952: 34–8; Dvornik 1949: 271–3; and in R. H. J. Jenkins 1962: 116, see Šišić 1925: 254–65.

⁸⁹ Evans 1989: 76–7. See the more sober approach to the problem in Barford 2001: 74–5, 98–9, who located the eastern Croats (Chorvati, Хървати) on the south-eastern fringe of the early Russian state near the upper Don.

the Sclavinias from the Franks and brought them symbolically inside the Byzantine *oikoumene* through Basil's diplomacy between the Slavs and the Romani from the Dalmatian cities.⁹⁰ The possible reliance on the oral sources of the Croats in the DAI was important only as part of the political discourse of those who presented it, 'explaining' the historical legitimacy of the political institutions and the identities that those institutions created, as, for example, the Romani as successors of the Romans, the Diocleans as successors of Diocletian's settlers, etc.⁹¹ It is interesting to note that the Croat *origo gentis* never connects the Croats with the Slavs – they were described as Slavs only in outside projections: 'Roman' in chapter 29 and Byzantine in chapter 31. Therefore, if the story of the arrival of the Croats in the DAI is indeed part of the Croat oral discourse, then we can see it as a politically and ideologically motivated myth that legitimated the existing situation and the political domination of the group over Dalmatia and Pannonia through common ancestors: the imaginary brothers and sisters mentioned in the DAI.⁹² It is also worthy to cite the recent discussion of Alimov, who focused his attention on the exaggerated opposition between the Croats and Avars in the Croat *origo gentis*. He concluded quite convincingly, tracing Pohl's earlier ideas, that the group which was called Croats were originally an integral part of the Avar political structures in the second qaganate, and needed to restate their separateness by exaggerating the opposition between them and the Avars, constructing the Avars as the 'Other'.⁹³

The chapter 31 story was part of the Byzantine narrative, and abbreviated stories from 29 and 30 into a single narrative line. It took the myth of the 'Roman' origins from Diocletian's settlers and joined it with the story that the Croats came and 'liberated' Illyricum from the Avars. It is the only existing source which dated the arrival of the Croats and Serbs in post-Roman Dalmatia into the times of Heraclius in the 7th century. What is most important is that this narrative implied Heraclius', i.e. Byzantine agency, in the events: with the blessing of the emperor the Croats settled and under his command they defeated the

⁹⁰ DAI, 30.126–142, 'legal regulation' of the new situation, cf. Pohl 1995: 221.

⁹¹ 'Romans': DAI, 29.14–53; Diocleans: DAI, 29.3–14; 35.

⁹² The control of the discourse was considered crucial for the manipulation of identity, see Pohl 1999, and in a different context the classic work of Cameron 1991 esp. 1–46.

⁹³ Alimov 2008: 105–10.

Avars, then Heraclius sent priests to baptise the Croats. This chapter was a master-narrative for the following chapters 32–36 as it repeated two basic facts: Dalmatia, and in wider sense Illyricum, was Byzantine land where the Croats and Serbs, and all other Slavic peoples in the region related or unrelated to them (Zachlumi, Terbounites, Kanalites, Diocleans and Arentani), settled with the permission of the Byzantine emperor, and acknowledged his power. It was a diplomatic blueprint for Byzantine diplomacy in the region, as Margetić saw it.⁹⁴

In saying this, it might seem possible to attempt to classify the stories Constantine told in chapters 29, 30 and 31 and recognise them as three different interrelated narratives. The story from chapter 29 showed one of the narratives of the past amongst the Dalmatian Romani, which explained their origins, from the foundation of the cities by Diocletian, all the way to their destruction by the Slavs/Avars. Chapter 30 brought a similar, but not identical narrative, which was joined with the Croat *origo gentis*. However, they functioned together as a single story in chapter 30: the Avars (not Slavs/Avars, as in chapter 29) defeated the Dalmatians and they were in turn defeated by the Croats. This narrative substantially changed the villains from the previous story, from the Slavs to the Avars, and established the Croats as the ‘good guys’, never saying specifically that the Croats were Slavs. It appears that the narrative originated in the framework of the Croat kingdom and incorporated two folk-tales, the Dalmatian tale of the fall of Salona and the Croat *origo gentis*, into one which justified the right of the Croats to rule over Dalmatia and Pannonia, and acknowledged the Dalmatians as the indigenous inhabitants of Dalmatia. Finally, chapter 31 was the emperor’s own reconstruction, which took elements from both narratives with a twist – including the agency of Heraclius, probably reinterpreting what the emperor could find written about Heraclius’ era.⁹⁵ The Byzantine story tells that the Croats, who had the ‘Slav’ neighbours the Serbs in the faraway ‘homeland’, defeated the Avars who earlier expelled the Romans settled there by Diocletian. The emperor made a ‘Reader’s Digest’ out of both narratives into the master narrative he used for later chapters 32–36, which showed the

⁹⁴ Margetić 1977: 20.

⁹⁵ Constantine was not necessarily inventing stories out of nothing. There is the story from chapter 9 of Nichephorus about the ‘Hun’ leader who came to Constantinople to ask for baptism from the emperor Heraclius. Constantine could easily recognise the baptism of Croats or Serbs in this story.

Byzantine historical rights over Illyricum and the peoples that inhabited it in emperor's own times – the descendent of the migrants.⁹⁶

Thus, we might say that the written sources did not say much about the arrival of the Croats in Illyricum and the early construction of their identity. The earliest sources were concerned with the traumatic experience of the Byzantine Empire in the 6th and 7th centuries when the *limes* on the Danube collapsed and the northern frontier remained exposed to raids by the trans-Danubian groups. Contemporary sources perceived those groups as Sclavenes, constructing a pseudo-ethnic identity of the heterogeneous population, in the tradition of the Graeco-Roman discourse on barbarians. There is no mention of the Croats in this period, and in fact evidence for a large-scale migration of Sclavenes and Avars in Dalmatia and the Dinaric Alps in this period is very scarce. The later sources, such as the archdeacon Thomas or Presbyter Diocleas, brought narrative constructions of these events from the perspective of the Latin-writing population in Dalmatia and were important as evidence for the construction of their own identity, as we shall see in the next chapters, rather than for the arrival of the 'Slavs' or Croats. Finally, the most important source for the Croat migration in the 7th century, Constantine VII's DAI, primarily testified to Constantine's personal interests, it was the narrative of the emperor himself and his way of thinking, with the ideological and identity discourses of his class and times, much more than his reconstruction of the past. It is a useful source for the emperor's present, or recent past, but not for events from the 7th century. Constantine worked with the identity-discourses of his times and the most recent past. The traces of the Croat *origo gentis* and other narratives from the region, such as the Dioclean, or the narrative of the Romani from the other Dalmatian cities, were evidence of how groups in the region saw themselves, how their ruling classes justified their power and position and how they imagined their origins – safely positioned inside Byzantine imperial discourse by Constantine. There is no doubt that Constantine's narrative also included memories of the past from the region, but these historical memories were distorted to a significant

⁹⁶ It is worthy to mention that strong emphasis of DAI on migrant origins of the 'Slavs' in Illyricum feeds upon older classical notion of primacy of autochthonous over migrant peoples, which was part of Athenian cultural legacy subsequently acquired by the Romans, Loraux 1996; Dench 2005: 96–101, 243–4; cf. also Gillett 2008: 405 for Late Antiquity.

degree even before Constantine received them. The story of the wandering of the Salonitans given in the HS is a good example of those distorted memories of the past in early medieval Dalmatia. If there is indeed a 'grain' of 'truth' in the DAI, the scholarship has no tools to isolate it with absolute certainty.

The stories of the Croat arrival and settlement in post-Roman Dalmatia were dated to the times of the emperor Heraclius and cannot be taken as bearers of historical 'truth'. They are narratives which used the popular figure of the militarily successful Byzantine ruler from the 7th century as a generic emperor⁹⁷ to explain change and transformation, to explain the past of the Romani from the Dalmatian cities, the origins of the Croat elite or to be used within Byzantine imperial ideology. We cannot erase nor reject from historiography what the HS, Diocleas or the DAI said about post-Roman Dalmatia. These sources remain important evidence which show us how the past was imagined in 10th century Constantinople, or remembered in 13th century Spalatum.⁹⁸ However, we should not reconstruct the past relying solely on historical memories from different historical periods, but rather try to focus on other aspects of social and identity transformation that occurred in post-Roman Dalmatia.

⁹⁷ Budak 1994: 64–5; 1995b: 74–5, cf. Kaegi 2003: 318–21 on mythological Heraclius, to whom posterity attributed certain critical decisions.

⁹⁸ Cf. similar in Budak 1995b: 78, who saw them as unusable as sources for the explanation and interpretation of the migration and the construction of early medieval Croat identity.

6. THE “DARK AGES”: 7TH AND 8TH CENTURY IN POST-ROMAN DALMATIA I (CEMETERIES)

In the previous chapter, we saw that the written sources did not provide reliable accounts of the Slav migrations in post-Roman western Illyricum, in particular Dalmatia. The bulk of activities connected with the migrating and raiding groups labelled Sclavenes (*Sklavenoi*, *Sclau*, *Sclauini*, *Sclavenes*, etc.) in our sources were connected with the eastern parts of Illyricum, and only in a very few instances do they appear in Istria and on the Adriatic coast. It is also clear that the sources provided no evidence at all for the appearance and existence of Croat identity in the 7th century, as the accounts from the later period, such as those in the DAI, must be treated with extreme caution as historical evidence for this period. An additional problem with the written sources is that there was almost no mention of the region between the early 7th century and late 8th/early 9th centuries. The scholarship mostly assumed that the settlement of the Slavs in significant numbers took place in this period in Dalmatia and the Dalmatian hinterland, but no valid written evidence exists to confirm this assumption.

Curta, in his *Making of the Slavs*, made an important assumption. His basic idea was that Slavic identity did not have a cultural and historical continuity with antiquity and prehistory. According to him, the ‘Slavs’ did not come to the Balkan Peninsula from some defined ancient homeland, but rather their ‘Slavness’ was developed only in their interaction with the Eastern Roman *limes*, as a consequence of Justinian’s aggressive trans-Danubian policy. The people called ‘Slavs’ became ‘Slavs’ on the Danubian *limes*, not in the Pripet marshes.¹ The elements of cultural *habitus* of the trans-Danubian population were visible inside the *limes*, maybe as early as the 5th century,² but that does not mean that these elements reflected a ‘Slavness’, but rather showed cultural interaction and population movements in Late Antiquity. Curta

¹ Curta 2001a. The Roman/Byzantine *limes* became an interface where new identities were constructed, Curta 2005a; cf. Elton 1996.

² Trifunović 1997, see also earlier Janković and Janković 1990, or Janković 2004. The idea of a ‘Slav homeland’ in Pannonia and the Danubian plains was popular amongst post-WWII Serbian linguists, e.g. I. Popović 1959, but also in the work of other linguists, such as Trubačev 1985 or Nichols 1993, for example.

explained that the East Roman – Slav conflicts through the economic-social model of competition amongst existing trans-Danubian groups, which were the result of the inflation of the East Roman currency and the temporary interruption in monetary exchange with the Mediterranean world, visible in the archaeological evidence dated between 545 and 565.³ The social reaction to the change in economic circumstances was reflected through the rise of warrior elites who used war as their only way of gaining prestige objects, which were the basis of their political power and social identity.⁴ In short, Curta's model argued that 'Slav masses' became 'Slav' only in their contact with the Roman frontier, and that the 'masses' was quantitatively much less numerous than previously thought, although the depopulation of some areas might have made their numbers more significant. Archaeological evidence for the demographic decline in 7th century eastern Illyricum confirmed it to be particularly serious, although it is highly unlikely that none of the population survived.⁵

Curta was right when he emphasized that the beginning of the process of 'becoming Slav' should be seen in the context of the development of Justinian's *limes* and the politisation of the cultural *habitus* of the trans-Danubian population. However, this process continued and resulted in the multiplicity of 'Slavnesses' which were constructed in the interaction with existing regional and political-ideological structures that these groups encountered and remained in contact with, such as the Byzantines, Franks, Bavarians etc. 'Slavness' remained a common denominator of these groups, a cultural stereotype which appeared in the perception of existing sources, but in reality, behind its monolithic structure, was hiding a multiplicity of 'Slav' identities in the early medieval period, some of which had very little in common with each other, except for sharing a similar language.

This radical reassessment of the nature of 'Slav' identity in the early medieval times allows us to approach the problems of identity-transformation in post-Roman Dalmatia from a different angle. The pre-Slavic population was not a factor which has been sufficiently taken into account in earlier research, and their narrative is sorely missing from the picture – *"Instead they remained as another group*

³ Curta 1996.

⁴ This model is similar to the model of 'Celtic' late Iron Age migrations in the 4th century BC, Fitzpatrick 1996; Wells 1999: 99 ff.

⁵ Curta 2001a: 120 ff. See also Živković 1997a; Liebeschuetz 2003: 71–5; Janković 2004 see pp. 75 and 159.



Picture 4: 'Old-Croat' cemetery in Velim-Velištak. Photo: Zoran Alajbeg, with permission of the Archaeological Museum in Zadar.

that had to be integrated into the state system".⁶ As discussed in Chapter 1, the image of the victorious 'Slav flood' which settled in the Dalmatian 'empty house' in the 7th century, as visualised by Franjo Rački (himself drawing upon the tradition stretching from the humanist Lucius), the anti-Habsburg, panslavic and pro-Yugoslav Croatian historian from the late 19th century, still haunts Croatian and South Slavic scholarship, with research focusing on the 'Slavs' (or Croats) and which disregards the original inhabitants of the 'empty house'.

These two chapters will analyse the evidence for the transformation of identities in the 'Dark Ages' of Dalmatia, between the crucial periods of the 7th century, when the Byzantines mostly left Dalmatia and some groups of immigrant 'Slavs' from the north arrived there, and the 9th century, when the Avar qaganate was crushed by the armies of Charlemagne. In particular, the origins of the 'Roman' and 'Slav'

⁶ Evans 1989: 276. Evans, without important reason, denied the pre-Slavic population's ability to organise militarily and politically, outside of the Roman political framework. See also the recent work of Jakšić, who assumed the existence of an organised military elite, discussed below, p. 160, which could prove Evans wrong, Jakšić 2008. The military self-organisation of Roman landlords in the areas where they kept their power intact began in Late Antiquity, Whittaker 1994: 243–78, esp. 262 ff., cf. Halsall 2003: 44–5.

identities will be examined, which appeared in 9th century Dalmatia. This chapter in particular will focus on the material evidence from the 'Dark Ages', in particular the 'Pagan' horizon of the row-grave cemeteries of the 'Old-Croat' culture.

The 'Old-Croat' cemeteries

No useful written sources can help scholars to establish what occurred in Dalmatia in the 7th and 8th centuries, and we can only use material evidence which derives mostly from the numerous row-grave cemeteries (*Reihengräbenfelder*) in Dalmatia, attributed to the 'Old-Croat' archaeological culture. As mentioned earlier, (pp. 51–3), the usual division of the 'Old-Croat' cemeteries was into the older 'Pagan' and younger 'Christian' horizon.⁷ The 'Pagan' horizon was characterised by the presence of grave-goods, such as pottery vessels for food and drink, which dated from the early 8th to mid-9th centuries. The 'Christian' horizon is dated to between the mid-9th and early 12th centuries, and is characterised by the disappearance of grave-goods, apart from jewellery (in particular rings and earrings), the abandonment of the old cemeteries and the developing of new cemeteries placed around pre-Romanesque churches. As we saw earlier, (pp. 80–4), row-grave cemeteries first appeared in Dalmatia in the late 5th and 6th centuries. The difference between those earlier cemeteries and the 'Old-Croat' cemeteries is actually very minimal, mostly determined through the belief that the 'Old-Croat' cemeteries represent Slavs/Croats because they were dated later. In the material record, the 'Old-Croat' cemeteries showed much more frequent use of pottery in a funerary context, and developed more complex assemblages of grave-goods in the late 8th century. The 'Old-Croat' cemeteries were assumed by scholars to reflect the 'pagan' cultural beliefs of the newly arrived Slav/Croat population, which was strengthened by the remains of the pottery described as 'Slavic', probably broken over the graves, or pottery-vessels put inside as grave-goods.⁸ Settlements from this period outside of the Dalmatian

⁷ Vinski 1983/84: 188 n. 17 objected to the use of the term 'Pagan' horizon introduced by Belošević: 1980: 73 ff., as it would imply an existence of the 'Christian horizon'. As shown later on in this discussion, both terms 'Pagan' and Christian should not be understood literally in the context of the 'Old-Croat' cemeteries, and thus this objection of Vinski does not affect this terminology.

⁸ Belošević 1980: 69–80 is a classic and influential study; cf. Belošević 2000.

coastal cities were almost unknown, with a few notable exceptions, including the re-use of buildings from Late Antiquity in Nin and its immediate surroundings,⁹ or the assumed use of the older hill top settlements around Bribir.

Material evidence from these cemeteries was, in the previous scholarship, used to confirm a clear break with antiquity, which has been visible in the settlement of pagan 'Slavs' (or Croats, as the majority of archaeologists still support the 7th century migration theory) and the disappearance, or limited survival, of the pre-Slavic population, which 'civilised' the 'barbarian' Croats and were assimilated into the Croat 'ethnos'.¹⁰ The interpretative depth of the existing research is seriously restricted with the assumptions that the material from cemeteries passively mirrors the society which deposited it, instead of observing it as evidence for their active identity-making processes. Its limitations are especially visible when compared to more recent works into early medieval mortuary archaeology in Western Europe, in particular Anglo-Saxon England and Merovingian Gaul. The current trend in research is to go beyond the 19th century ethnic or religious 'charting' of burials and burial practices, and observe them from an anthropological perspective as a communal arena of active competition for the display and legitimisation of social power through burial rituals.¹¹

The recent study of 'Old-Croat' cemeteries by Sokol deserves to be paid some attention, because he has made some challenging conclusions and groundbreaking observations. Sokol criticised the dating of post-Roman cemeteries in Dalmatia in the late 7th and 8th centuries, as in his opinion they showed no strong links in the typology of the objects used as grave-goods with the cemeteries in neighbouring Istria and the Komani-Kruja culture, which were dated to that period. He pointed out that no contemporary Merovingian, or early Avar finds,

⁹ Belošević 1980: 80–3. The settlements were located on the locality of Banovac (Kolega 2005), and near the church of St. Cross (Belošević 1999), both in Nin. There is a good possibility that the locality of Pekinica, near Materiza, was a settlement, as traces of settlement-ware have been discovered and the place was situated near fresh water in antiquity and the Middle Ages, Belošević 1973: 222; 1980: 50, see Predovan 2008: 114–15.

¹⁰ Belošević 1980: 72, 133; 2000: 73–4, 76, and 82–3 is an important proponent of this view in Croatian archaeology, see also Jelovina 1976: 76, 148; Batović and Oštrić 1969: 255–9.

¹¹ Halsall 1995a; 1995b; 1998; Lucy 2000; Härke 2001; Lucy and Reynolds 2002; Effros 2002; 2003; Lee 2007; Williams 2006; 2007, and useful critical overviews in Williams 2005 and Symonds 2009 (to name just a few).

existed in Dalmatia. He also argued that it is impossible to detect in the archaeological record, either an indigenous population which continued the cultural traditions from Late Antiquity, or a small elite group of Croats who distinguished themselves from the rest of the population. Sokol established a new chronology of those cemeteries based on the grave-architecture, jewellery and grave-goods, which emphasised the unity of the 'Pagan' and 'Christian' horizon, as well as the unity of the Dalmatian coast with the hinterland in the material record. He concluded that the 'Old-Croat' culture was an entirely new material culture, which did not continue the cultural traditions with Late Antiquity or its population, and dated the earliest phase of those cemeteries into 795–850/855, which supported the views of late Croat migration by Margetić, which will be discussed in chapter 8.¹²

This study has some serious problems in its methodological framework, such as the use of the 'culture-history' approach which equates material culture with Croat ethnicity, and the full exclusion of the indigenous population from the historical narrative, which would create the 7th and 8th century as a completely empty space in the archaeological record of Dalmatia. However, despite these shortcomings, Sokol's criticisms of the earlier scholarship were certainly well-placed, especially the criticism of the cremation-preceding-inhumation chronological sequence of Belošević, and the assumptions that the 'Slav' pottery from Dalmatia was connected with the Prague type pottery from the 7th century – both issues which will be discussed later in this chapter. Finally, the opinion of Sokol (rather than his dating) that the earliest phase of the 'Old-Croat' culture represented a separate material culture, which did not continue indigenous traditions from Late Antiquity, should also be taken into consideration in the conclusion.

As shown earlier, there is a significant problem with dating of the 'Old-Croat' cemeteries. The majority of scholars dated the earliest of these cemeteries to the late 7th and 8th centuries, with the dissenting voice of Sokol, who argued that there is no evidence for these cemeteries appearing before the end of the Avar qaganate in c. 795.¹³ The beginning of burials at cemeteries with cremations in Dalmatia, whether confirmed or only suspected, is dated to 650–700 (Velim-Velištak,

¹² Sokol 2006.

¹³ There are quite a few studies which use the typology of jewellery and earrings to establish different chronological phases and sub-phases: R. Jurić 1981; Zekan 1987; Jakšić 1989; Burić 2001; Petrinc 2002; 2005; Jarak 2002; Sokol 2006.

Dubravice-Skradin, Maklinovo-Kašić, St. Lawrence-Donje Polje, Gluvine kuće-Glavice), while the beginning of inhumation burials was roughly dated to 700–800, for example the cemeteries at Klarića kuće-Stankovci, Materiza-Nin, Ždrijac-Nin, St. Anselmus-Nin, St. Cross-Nin, Bukorovića podvornice-Knin, Trljuge-Biljane Donje. Around 775–800 burials began in the new ‘pagan’ cemeteries, such as at Vratnice-Bribir, Novi Put-Bribir, Begovača-Biljane Donje, Spas-Knin, Biskupija-Knin, Svećurje-Kaštel Stari, Gomjenica-Prijedor, Bagruša-Petoševci and Kamenica-Mahovljani. Unfortunately, much damage has been done to the material, as some of these cemeteries were excavated in the 19th century by enthusiastic antiquarians, without proper archaeological training. To add to this, most of the excavated graves were only a fraction of the total numbers, as the cemeteries were often damaged by later cultivation of the soil, or other types of land works. The largest necropolis from the ‘pagan’ phase is Ždrijac-Nin (2 connected cemeteries – 334 graves located) followed by the Biskupija-Knin complex, which has more than 200 graves located in three cemeteries.

The bulk of these cemeteries were concentrated around the coast, between the rivers Zrmanja and Krka, especially the Ravni Kotari area in the hinterland of the city of Iader. Especially abundant with these earliest cemeteries is the area in the bay of Nin, where ancient Aenona was located. The most important early cemeteries were the earliest level of cemeteries in Nin (near the churches of St. Cross and St. Anselmus, and the Banovac locality) and the cemeteries of Materiza and Ždrijac, both on the outskirts of Nin. In the rest of Ravni Kotari important cemeteries were found at Kašić (Glavčurak, Razbojine, and Maklinovo hill), Klarića kuće-Stankovci, Trljuge-Biljane Donje, Velim-Velištak near Benkovac and Bribir (Vratnice, Novi put). Close to them in the upper flow of the Krka is the Biskupija complex near Knin – with the cemeteries Crkvina, Bračića podvornice, Bukorovića podvornice, and in the lower flow of the Krka were the cemeteries around Šibenik – Dubravice near Skradin and the Danilo complex.¹⁴ In comparison with the northern Dalmatian coast, only a few early cemeteries from this period were located on the central Dalmatian coast, mostly around

¹⁴ See the overview and more recent literature in Belošević 2000: 80–2. The more recent excavations: Kolega 2005 (Banovac); Belošević 1998/99; (St. Cross); Kolega 1996; 2001a; 2001b; 2002 (St. Anselmus). See also Zekan 1996 (Bribir); Krnčević 1998 (Šibenik region); Petrincec 2005 (Bukorovića Podvornica-Biskupija); Werner 1978/79 (Crkvina-Biskupija).



Map 3: 'Old Croat' archaeological sites in Dalmatia.

NIN	St. Cross, St. Anselmus, Banovac, Ždrijac, Materiza
KAŠIĆ	Glavčurak, Razbojine, Maklinovo hill, Grede, Mastirine
BRIBIR	Vratnice, Novi put
BENKOVAC	(Cental Ravni Kotari)
1	Klarića kuće-Stankovci
2	Velim-Velištak
3	Biljane Donje (Trljuge, Begovača)
4	Galovac
ŠIBENIK	Dubravice-Skradin, St. Lawrence-Donje Polje, Danilo complex
KNIN	Biskupija complex, Bračića podvornice, Bukorovića podvornice, St. Spas
SINJ	Zduš-Vrlika, Glavice-Sinj
LIVNO	Grborezi-Mramorje, Rešeterica and St. Ivo near Livno
LAKTAŠI	Bagruša-Petoševci, Kamenica-Mahovljani
GLAMOČ	Vrbe, Rudići
MOSTAR	Cim, Hodbina
RAJLOVAC	Mihaljevići, Rogačići
ČAPLJINA	Mogorjelo, Žitomislići, Čitluk
5	Gomjenica-Prijedor
6	Ivoševci
7	Svećurje-Kaštel Stari
8	Gradac-Posušje
9	Kicelj-Tuzla
10	Grudine-Čipuljići

the river Cetina in the *polje* of Sinj (Zduš-Vrlika, Glavice-Sinj). A very small number of early cemeteries were located in the area between Tragurium and Spalatum (the hinterland of Salona) and the earliest known cemetery in that region appears to be Svećurje-Kaštel Stari, dated c. 800.¹⁵

There is also some scattered evidence from early medieval cemeteries and individual burials in the hinterland, with a few cemeteries located in the valley of Neretva and Posavina, but the small number could be attributed to insufficient exploration.¹⁶ The cemeteries can be divided into northern, just south of the Sava river (Gomjenica-Prijedor, Bagruša-Petoševci and Kamenica-Mahovljani near Banja Luka, and newly found necropolis in Kicelj-Tuzla)¹⁷, and southern, with some in the central mountainous region (Mihaljevići and Rogačići in Rajlovac near Sarajevo, Crkvina-Grudine in Čipuljići near Bugojno),¹⁸ and the valley of the Neretva river (Cim and Hodbina near Mostar, and Čitluk, Žitomislići and Mogorjelo-Višići near Čapljina).¹⁹ Important early cemeteries which have graves from the 'Pagan' horizon were Mramorje-Grborezi, Rešetarica and St. Ivo near Livno in Herzegovina, and cemeteries in Glamočko *polje* (Vrbe and Rudići).²⁰ The northern cemeteries from the hinterland (Gomjenica-Prijedor, Bagruša-Petoševci, Kicelj-Tuzla) are roughly dated to the 8th to 12th centuries, on account of material evidence which corresponds with the 'Old-Croat' archaeological culture (9th–12th centuries), East Alpine culture (8th–10th centuries, found only in the northern graveyards), and the Bijelo Brdo complex (mid-10th to early 12th centuries). As Fekeža showed from her analysis of relatively rare early medieval pottery from burials

¹⁵ Milošević 2000b (Cetina valley); Milošević 1997; Petrinc 2002 (Glavice-Sinj); Burić 2007 (Svećurje).

¹⁶ See general overviews in Miletić 1988; 1989; Fekeža 1989. See the more detailed map of pottery finds from the early medieval cemeteries and individual burials in the Dalmatian hinterland in Fekeža 1989: 212.

¹⁷ Miletić 1966/67 (Gomjenica-Prijedor); Žeravica 1985/86 (Bagruša-Petoševci); Miletić 1979 (Mahovljani). In Kicelj-Tuzla 12 graves were published as far (Bakalović 2006), but at least 12 more was discovered later. Tomićić 2007 recently revealed the strong links between the population living between the valleys of Una and Vrbas and Siscia.

¹⁸ Miletić 1956; 1960/61 (Mihaljevići); Paškvalin 1968; Paškvalin and Miletić 1988 (Crkvina-Grudine).

¹⁹ Bojanovski 1961 (Čitluk); Leko and Anđelić 1967 (Cim); Anđelić 1970 (Žitomislići); Basler and Miletić 1988 (Mogorjelo).

²⁰ Basler and Bešliagić 1964; Petrinc 1999 (Grborezi and St. Ivo); Vrdoljak 1988 (Rešetarica); Miletić 1975/76; 1980/81 (Vrbe and Rudići).

in the Dalmatian hinterland, it is possible to date the majority of finds to the period from the later 8th to 10th centuries.²¹ Most graves were simple, with the lying of the deceased in the ground without any grave architecture, which has been ascribed to a lack of stone.²² Some cemeteries, in particular Mihaljevići-Rajlovac near Sarajevo and Kicelj-Tuzla also had unusual North-South orientation of the graves, with variations northeast-southeast or northwest-southeast, which was convincingly ascribed to the nature of the terrain.²³ Usually, no settlements are located close to the cemeteries with the exception of Nin. In hinterland, only Mahovljani and Petoševci were located close to a settlement, and especially significant appears to be the settlement in Berek near Mahovljani, inhabited from the 9th to 12th/13th centuries.²⁴ It is also worthy to mention that few cemeteries corresponds with late antique churches, whether as a burials occurring inside late antique church or besides it, such as Crkvina-Žitomislići, Cim-Mostar, Crkvina-Grudine and Čitluk.

Modest evidence from the hinterland necessitates a focus on the coast with the immediate hinterland for this and the later period. The cemeteries on the Dalmatian coast have been reasonably well researched, and more new sites have been discovered in recent times. More than fifty cemeteries pre-dating the 9th century were located in the wider area of Zadar, and over twenty in the rest of coastal Dalmatia, according to the recent estimate by R. Jurić. The potential for new discoveries remains significant, as a number of located, but not researched, medieval localities remains high. For example, out of forty-two medieval localities noted in and around Nin, only thirteen have been excavated. Archaeologists have assumed that the majority of these burials were pagan, because burial customs from Late Antiquity changed, showing the appearance of grave-goods and the absence of Christian iconography, which was attributed to the pagan 'Slav' settlement. The disappearance of grave-goods from cemeteries in the 9th century was attributed to the Christianisation of the 'Slavs'/Croats. Cremation

²¹ Fekeža 1989, see also Miletić 1963 for the analysis of jewellery and weapons.

²² Miletić 1972; 1989 with references.

²³ Miletić 1956: 24 (Mihaljevići-Rajlovac); Bakalović 2006: 183 (Kicelj-Tuzla), see also Miletić 1966/67: 110–11.

²⁴ Miletić 1979: 158; Žeravica 1985/86: 193. Heath with pottery has been located close to cemetery and church in Crkvina-Grudine, Paškvalin 1968. Also, the remains of settlement are also discovered near Kicelj-Tuzla cemetery, but this discovery still waits for publication.



Picture 5: Cremation grave from Velim-Velištak. Photo: Franjo Nedved, Ivan Čondić, with permission of the Archaeological Museum in Zadar.

burials, which were detected sporadically in post-Roman Dalmatia, were automatically ascribed to ‘Slavs’/Croats, as well as the use of rough handmade ‘Slav’ pottery as grave-goods, or scattered above the graves. Cemeteries in Dalmatia have been discussed in a few seminal works, which synthesised numerous individual publications, but as some cemeteries wait for detailed publication, there is still much to expect from the archaeology of this period.²⁵

Cremation and the ‘Slavs’

Cremation in Dalmatia is a highly controversial topic. The indigenous population used cremation in the late Iron Age and early Roman times. However, a general change from cremation to inhumation in the late Roman Empire and the Christianisation of the region resulted in

²⁵ Belošević 1980, but also Jelovina 1976 and Sokol 2006 focused on a wider area and time-span. See Jarak 2006: 197–202 for the most recent overview of the scholarship, R. Jurić 2007: 223 for the estimated number of post-Roman and early medieval cemeteries, and Predovan 2008: 132–3 for numbers of medieval localities in Nin and its surroundings.

inhumation being the only burial custom detectable in Late Antiquity. Cremation was regarded in the earlier and present scholarship as an ancestral 'Slav' custom in Central and Eastern Europe. Its presence provided 'clear' evidence for 'Slav'/Croat settlement in post-Roman Dalmatia, which fits the archaeological material into the dominating scholarly and popular discourse of the 'Slav/Croat migrations'. In spite of that, for a long time, there were no traces of cremation discovered in the archaeological record whatsoever, and only recently was more decisive evidence for the existence of cremation in Dalmatia established. However, cremations remained clearly a quantitative minority compared with inhumations, although it is reasonable to assume that a certain percentage of cremations disappeared from archaeological site because of the shallow burial of urns and the subsequent destruction by digging of graves for inhumation burials, or land cultivation.²⁶

There are only four locations in coastal Dalmatia where cremation has been confirmed. Urns with human remains were found in the cemeteries on Maklinovo hill-Kašić, Dubravice-Skradin, St. Lawrence-Donje Polje near Šibenik, while in Velim-Velištak near Benkovac analysis has proved the existence of human bones amongst charred remains. The number of confirmed cremations remains modest compared to the total number of burials – 13 out of 55 in Kašić, 6 out of 56 in Skradin, 2 out of 350 in Donje Polje and 19 out of 137 in Velim.²⁷ Cremation has been assumed in Smrdelji-Debeljak near Skradin, and Gluvine kuće-Glavice 2 near Sinj, where ashes from a fire have been located, but without human remains. There was also a destroyed cemetery in Totići near Cetina, with some traces of ashes and pottery pieces which might be cremation urns, according to Belošević. A few other localities were assumed from the 19th century observation diaries of the Croatian amateur-archaeologist, the Franciscan priest Lujo Marun, but no evidence is available today, so they cannot be taken seriously.²⁸ Analysis of the most recently discovered cremation burials in Donje

²⁶ Z. Gunjača 1995: 163; Belošević 1980: 47; 2000: 79. See also Barford 2001: 201 on the invisibility of 'Slav' cremations in the archaeological record.

²⁷ Belošević 1974; 1980: 46–8, 67–9; 2000: 75–6; Evans 1989: 295 (Maklinovo-Kašić hill); Z. Gunjača 1995; cf. Krnčević 1998: 206 (Skradin); Krnčević 1995; 1998 (Donje Polje); R. Jurić 2007 (Velim), and Belošević 2000: 74–80; Sekelj Ivančan and Tkalčec 2006: 167–77.

²⁸ Petrinec 2002: 206–9 (Glavice); Belošević 2000: 78 (Totići); the PhD thesis of Petrinec referenced in Ivančan and Tkalčec 2006: 169 n. 24 (Smrdelji), Petrinec 2002: 208 (Marun's observations).

Polje has revealed female ashes containing traces of metal, assumed to be a knife, and a fragment of animal bone, while Velim burials have shown a uniformity of burial pyres without detectable additions. The most peculiar finds were the remains of a human foetus, added to the female urn from Donje polje only after the cremation, and also one inhumated skeleton from Velim exposed to fire post-mortally, recalling a practice known from some other cemeteries in coastal Dalmatia and the hinterland, discussed below.²⁹

The hinterland of Dalmatia was explored in a much more modest way than the coastal area. There, the overwhelming majority of graves were also inhumations, with only a few confirmed cremations. One cinerary urn was found in Gomjenica and two urns in Bagruša-Petoševci. Cremation was assumed in a few more places, such as Nerezi-Čapljina or Hodbina-Mostar in the Neretva valley, Trnovice-Zvornik, and Rača and Dvorovi near Bijeljina in the valley of Drina in the most eastern parts of Dalmatia.³⁰ It is curious that in southern Pannonia, between the rivers Sava and Drava, the region which was assumed to be 'flooded' with the cremation-practicing 'Slavs', we have only one cremation cemetery discovered thus far – 10 attested burials in the Duga Street-Vinkovci – and in the neighbouring Slovenian territory was located only one cremation in the locality Brsti-Ptuj (although there were certainly more), while around the Danube in modern Vojvodina were located one cremation in Ciglane-Čelarevo and two in Novi Slankamen.³¹ To these should be added the most recent and still unpublished discovery of the decorated urn with human and bovine bones placed in the foundations of the early wooden Carolingian church from the 9th century in Lobar, near the church of St. Marija Gorska in Croatian Zagorje, northwest of Zagreb.³²

²⁹ There are 1 male and 1 female cremation in the Donje polje urns, while in the Velim-Velištak cremations have been detected 4 males, 8 females, and 4 children, Šlaus 2006: 56–9.

³⁰ Gomjenica: Miletić 1966/67: 112–13; Bagruša-Petoševci: Žeravica 1985/86: 153–5, 161–2; Rača and Trnovice: Fekeža 1989: 221–2; Dvorine: Čremošnik 1970; and the overview in Sekelj Ivančan and Tkalčec 2006: 175–7.

³¹ Sekelj Ivančan and Tkalčec 2006 (Duga street Vinkovci); Guštin 2005: 28; Pleterski 2008 (Slovenia); Janković and Janković 1990: 104–5, 117 (Čelarevo and Novi Slankamen).

³² The discovery made by archaeologists from the University of Zagreb in 2009, under the leadership of Krešimir Filipec. See Filipec 2007 for a summary of earlier excavations in this locality.

Recent confirmation of the presence of cremations in post-Roman Dalmatia has led Belošević to assume that inhumation cemeteries cannot be dated before the 8th century, and he tried to establish a linear chronological-stratigraphical sequence which would start with the second half of the 7th century 'Slav' cremations, and continued with the 8th century 'pagan' inhumations in the furnished graves, which lasted until the conversion to Christianity in c. 800–850, considered to be the cause of cessation of the habit of putting grave-goods in graves in scholarship. Cremations were thought to represent the ethnic 'Slav'/Croat way of burial, allegedly brought to Dalmatia from their 'homeland', while the shift from cremation to inhumation was ascribed to the 'civilising' cultural influences of the indigenous population on the settled majority of the 'Slavs'/Croats.³³ The issue of birituality on cemeteries in Dalmatia and the Dalmatian hinterland, i.e. the parallel existence of cremations and inhumations, has been highly disputed. In recent times Belošević and Petrinc argued against, and Vinski, Evans, Milošević and Sokol argued in support of the presence of biritual cemeteries.³⁴

This chronological-stratigraphical sequence and the rejection of the existence of biritual cemeteries in post-Roman Dalmatia, sometimes stands upon shaky evidence, especially in the assumption that cremation and inhumations did not exist at the same time. Only two urns from Donje polje have been, thus far, shown to be older than the inhumation graves from the same cemetery, as the Velim stratigraphy was too complex to give straightforward answers, whether the cremations predated inhumations and Maklinovo-Kašić cremations occurred less than 50 meters from the inhumation burials, leaving open the question as to whether there were two cemeteries or one, as the area between the inhumations and cremations was not explored.³⁵ Gunjača assumed

³³ Belošević 2000: 74; Petrinc 2002: 207–9. Certainly not the only opinion, see Evans 1989: 241 who questioned the opinion of Belošević that the cremations' phase preceded the inhumation, based on a single cemetery. See also Jarak 2002: 247–8 who plausibly argued in favour of dating the earliest 'Pagan' horizon inhumations earlier towards the 7th century.

³⁴ Against birituality: Belošević 2000: 77; Petrinc 2002: 209–10, 223; 2007 (Dalmatia); Miletić 1966/67: 113 (Dalmatian hinterland). For birituality: Vinski 1987: 200–1; Milošević 1995: 103–4; 2001: 53–4 (Maklinovo-Kašić); Evans 1989: 241 (Dubrave); Sokol 2006: 165 (Velim). All arguments for and against are given in a culture-history methodological framework, assuming that 'Slav' and indigenous ethnicities can be detected through burial rites and deposited artefacts.

³⁵ Donje polje stratigraphy: Krnčević 1995; 1998: 210–11, 218, location of Maklinovo cremations Belošević 1974; 1980: 46–7; Evans 1989: 295. Belošević later increased the



Map 4: Cremation sites.

Confirmed cremations

1. Maklinovo-Kašić
2. Skradin-Dubravice
3. Donje polje
4. Velim-Velišćak
5. Bagruša-Petoševci
6. Gomjenica
7. Donja Street – Vinkovci
8. Ciglane Čelarevo
9. Novi Slankamen

Suspected cremations

- A Smrdelji-Skradin
- B Glavice-Sinj
- C Dvorovi-Bijeljina
- D Nerezi-Čapljina
- E Kamenica-Mahovljani
- F Rača
- G Trnovice
- H Nerezi
- I Hodbina

that the cremations predated inhumations in Dubravice, but also acknowledged that the cemetery was damaged by land cultivation and that the earliest inhumation graves were positioned at different depths. The other problem in Dubravice was the fact that the inhumation graves, next to the cremations, were of a later date.³⁶ Similar problems existed in determining the stratigraphy of the cremations in the Sava valley – in Gomjenica and Mahovljani to be more precise.³⁷

estimate to 100m (typo?) Belošević 2000: 77, while Vinski 1987: 200–1 thought that Maklinovo was indeed a single cemetery.

³⁶ Z. Gunjača 1995: 159–60, 163; Petrinec 2002: 207–9.

³⁷ Sekelj Ivančanin and Tkalčec 2006: 174–5.

Problems appear at the other levels as well, as no cremation in post-Roman Dalmatia thus far corresponds with the times of the 'Slav migrations' in the 6th and early 7th centuries. The cremations from the north are dated to the later period: the urns from the cremation burials in the Dalmatian hinterland (Gomjenica and Petoševci) suggest a much later date from the 6th and the early 7th centuries and they are dated no earlier than the year 800, or even later.³⁸ The ¹⁴C analysis of the some of the recent finds in southern Pannonia (Duga Street-Vinkovci) has dated both of the cremations to the period of the second Avar qaganate. Grave 6 is dated between 667 and 780, and grave 8 between 672 and 776, with pottery dated with less certainty to the late 7th/early 8th centuries.³⁹ With persuasive arguments Sokol questioned the usual dating of the 'Old-Croat' cinerary urns to the mid-late 7th century, pointing out that they were typologically much more similar to the late Avar, or even post-Avar period urns and pottery from Hungary, which has been dated to the 8th and 9th centuries.⁴⁰ The dating of scarce Dalmatian and south Pannonian cremations to the 8th century and later strengthens the case for a parallel existence of cremations and inhumations, and makes less certain the opinion of Belošević that the 'Old-Croat' cremations preceded inhumations. The parallel existence of inhumations and cremations in post-Roman Dalmatia show that the burial customs were an active communal choice, rather than a passive reflection of ethnicity.

The finds of charred wood and ashes from hearths in the Dalmatian cemeteries has blurred the boundaries between inhumation and cremation. They were thought to be a product of burning fire over the grave for other ritual purposes, a custom which was also registered in Istria and the Dalmatian hinterland.⁴¹ Charcoal remains were discovered in the cemeteries at Materiza-Nin, Glavice-Sinj and recently in Svećurje-Kaštel Stari between Salona and Tragurium. In Klarića kuće-Stankovci cemetery from southern central Ravni Kotari, was located a hearth and ashes in the graves. It has been assumed that the

³⁸ Žeravica 1985/86: 161–2, cf. Miletić 1966/67: 138.

³⁹ Sekelj Ivančanin and Tkalčec 2006: 191–3.

⁴⁰ Sokol 2006: 164–6. This opinion corresponds with Curta 2001a: 234 who redated the 'Slav' pottery from Mušiči to late Avar times.

⁴¹ Assumed in the literature to be for chasing away evil spirits, Marušić 1967: 336 (Istria); Žeravica 1985/86: 133, 148, 158 (hinterland), or maybe being transitional phase between cremation and inhumation, Evans 1989: 241–2. It has also been speculated about the existence of otherwise unknown 'Slav' ritus of cremating body and placing ashes in other graves with inhumation burials, Miletić 1966/67: 113.

charred material was heaped over the body, which was already in the grave. The cemetery in Materiza-Nin showed three skeletons which were additionally burned, similarly like the one in Velim, and in Svećurje fire was burned near the graves and the remains of burned pottery were discovered in a hearth.⁴² However, these discoveries were never placed in broader perspective of post-Roman world, but were observed exclusively as the sign of survivals of 'Slav paganism'. Charcoal graves in England were noted in the archaeological literature, which were comparable to those in post-Roman Dalmatia and were used for practical purposes, such as minimizing the effects of decomposition, as a sign of status, or even in a Christian context showing humility and penitence, and help the body to achieve salvation.⁴³ In Merovingian Gaul, the remains of charcoal were also found after the conversion and can be connected with the ways the elite identity was displayed in period while grave-goods were still used as a form of symbolic expression in burial.⁴⁴ Therefore, this custom was not necessarily sign of cremation, or even 'paganism', but of social status and choice.

The most important problem is the frequent assumption in literature that cremations were a 'Slav' way of burial, and therefore showed the presence of 'Slav' communities. Theodore Syncellus mentioned cremations of the 'Slavs' who were killed during the siege of Constantinople in 626, but did not specify whether it was their ancestral custom, or simply a necessity in order to prevent the spread of disease. In a wider context, it is worthy to note that the archaeological record of Central and Eastern Europe, including western and north-western Romania, in the 6th to mid-9th centuries showed the appearance of cremation, but not as an exclusive burial rite. Cremations were also discovered in the area associated with the Avar qaganate in Pannonia, and south of the Danube (Sirmium, Bulgaria, one in Olympia in Greece), but in negligible numbers, compared with the number of inhumation cemeteries.⁴⁵

⁴² Belošević 1980: 20, 79; Evans 1989: 301 (Materiza); Belošević 1980: 55–6; Evans 1989: 103 (Stankovci); Petrinc 2002: 206–9 (Glavice); Burić 2007: 108–9, 111 (Svećurje). The appearance of charcoal graves was mostly ascribed to the early period of the 7th (Glavice) or 8th centuries (Materiza, Stankovci). However, the cemetery in Svećurje was dated later, at c. 800–830, Burić 2007: 112, which showed that this custom cannot be pinpointed only to the earliest cemeteries.

⁴³ Daniell 1997: 157–9, 178–80; Thompson 2002; 2004: 117–24.

⁴⁴ Effros 2003: 165–6.

⁴⁵ Theod. Sync. 32; Barford 2001: 200–6, Map IX; Sekelj Ivančan and Tkalčec 2006: 181–90. The cremation cemetery in Olympia was also dated after 700, Curta 2001a: 234.

The mere ratio of inhumations and cremations in the archaeological record of post-Roman Dalmatia (even if we allow for the possibility that a certain number of cremations were lost), can only suggest that Dalmatia was not 'flooded' by cremation-practicing 'Slavs' in the 7th century, but that cremation was an exceptional and minor occurrence in the burial practice from the 7th to 9th centuries.

It is important to remember that cremation was a very specific, complex and carefully staged set of mnemonic devices, techniques of remembrance; deliberate and active choices which symbolised affiliations with certain ideas or groups and not a passive reflection of society or the ethnic group that practiced it.⁴⁶ The small sample of cremations from post-Roman Dalmatia that we currently have at our disposal does not allow more insightful conclusions, but even with such a small sample it is possible to assume their complexity and heterogeneity. There were two basic ways of ashes disposal which might be detected thus far, cinerary urns from Maklinovo-Kašić and Donje Polje and the placing of ashes straight in the ground in Velim.⁴⁷ The cremation ashes had traces of metal and animal bone from the funeral pyre in Donje Polje, but nothing was shown in the ashes from Velim. There were also mixed rites of cremation and inhumation visible in the additional exposure of the body/skeleton to the fire in Materiza-Nin and Velim, the placement of ashes in graves in the Stankovci and Dalmatian hinterland and a peculiar addition of a non-cremated foetus with the female's ashes in Donje Polje.

The presence of cremation in Dalmatia was not evidence for the 'earliest traces of Slav/Croat migration', but only suggests that a minority of people in post-Roman Dalmatia deliberately chose that way of burial, whether to show their social status, immigrant origins, clan membership, to project an ideology or power-relations inside society through a lasting sequence of ritualised commemorative stages,⁴⁸ or

⁴⁶ Williams 2002; 2003; 2004. As Williams 2002 argued, the cremations in England might show a political or ideological affiliation with North European funerary practices, but not necessarily a passive reflection of one's ancestry.

⁴⁷ As Belošević 1974; 1980: 46–8, 67–9; 2000: 75–6 noted, there were more remains of cremation (20) than reconstructed urns (13) in Maklinovo-Kašić, thus it is possible to suggest that not all of the cremation remains were deposited in urns.

⁴⁸ Cremation shortens the decomposition of the body, purifies it and fastens the passage to the other world. The preparation of the pyre, the cremation, and the subsequent treatment of the ashes, might have extended over days, weeks or even years, as shown in Williams 2004; see also Barford 2001: 200.

for any other reason. It was a complex ritual which demanded considerable resources, such as firewood, which was scarce in Dalmatian coast and immediate hinterland, as incineration could take up to 10 hours.⁴⁹ There is no valid evidence to dispute a general chronological co-existence of inhumation and cremation in the Dalmatian cemeteries, and even if some inhumations occur within cemeteries with cremations, such as Maklinovo-Kašić, there is no reason to see cremations predating them as separate chronological horizon.⁵⁰

Inhumation and 'paganism'

The inhumation graveyards in post-Roman Dalmatia showed a general cultural uniformity, which did not reveal a striking change of cultural customs, or a significant population change with the arrivals that might have belonged to a different cultural *habitus*. The burials were present as furnished or non-furnished inhumations in row-grave cemeteries. There were two distinctive sub-phases: Early (pre-Carolingian) which did not show a display of horse-gear and weapons in the graves, and the Later (Carolingian) with horse-gear and weapons, mostly made in the Carolingian fashion, dated after c. 775. The orientation of the graves was mostly East-West, with occasional regional variations and examples of individual graves orientated in different way. The deceased was in most cases laid on his/her back with hands parallel with the body. Double and even triple graves, with two or three bodies placed together, were not numerous, but were not uncommon – the largest percentage of such burial was in Ždrijac-Nin, where double graves represent 8% of the total graves.⁵¹

The architecture of the graves differs, and there are a few distinctive types that might be distinguished in the 'pagan' phase.⁵² The most

⁴⁹ Williams 2004: 271.

⁵⁰ Petrinec 2007: 81–2 redated Maklinovo-Kašić inhumations to the early 8th century, but there is no evidence for the dating of the cremations. Cremation in southern Pannonia (Donja Street) and Sava valley (Gomjenica, Petoševci) coexisted with inhumations in the wider area.

⁵¹ Belošević 1980: 67 ff.; 2000: 80–91; 2007a; Evans 1989: 86 ff.; Sokol 2006: 105–12, 144 ff. Stoodley suggested that multiple burials were a communal reaction to a situation out of control after contemporary multiple deaths appear in small community, aimed at stopping further deaths, Stoodley 2002.

⁵² There have been attempts to make typologies of grave architecture, Sokol 2006: 144–8; Belošević 1980: 134; Jelovina 1976: 148–50. Jelovina assumed that it was impossible to date graves through architecture, as the same types were used in different

numerous were those in burial chambers made of stone. This type consisted of different sub-types, varying from the graves with single stone or a few stones placed around the body, to more elaborate stone architecture. Slightly less frequent were the simple earth graves without any grave architecture, with the body was laid straight in a hole in the ground. Earth graves were most numerous only at the Materiza-Nin cemetery, and elsewhere usually took no more of third of all the graves at individual cemetery, such as in Ždrijac-Nin or Maklinovo-Kašić. A rarer form of burial was with wooden coffins – the biggest concentration of such burials was shown in Ždrijac-Nin (20), but they also existed elsewhere, such as in Dubravice-Skradin, Crkvine-Biskupija, and Glavice-Sinj. It was also not uncommon to find stone blocks placed over the bodies, or under the bodies, such as in the cemetery in Razbojine-Kašić.⁵³ Very rarely the deceased were buried in sarcophagi made of spolia from Late Antiquity; the only occurrences from this early period thus far were noted in Crkvine-Biskupija, Begovača-Biljane Donje, and Crkvina-Galovac. The use of sarcophagi occurred in cemeteries which showed continuity with the late antique sepulchre places. The display in richness of the Carolingian-style grave-goods in the mausoleum in St. Mary's basilica in Crkvine-Biskupija near Knin suggests elite burials, but others have negligible (Begovača) or no grave-goods (Galovac).⁵⁴

The quantity of grave-goods was usually not large, and was not always present in graves. Grave-goods can be divided into a few categories, such as pottery vessels, small tools (small knives, needles, iron keys, iron nails, stone knife-sharpeners, flints, tinders, razors), hygienic tools (sticks for ear-cleaning, combs), weapons (axes, long battle knives, swords, spears, arrowheads), equestrian equipment (spurs), cloth, small jewellery (earrings, glass beads and bead-necklaces). Grave-goods before c. 775 do not include equestrian equipment and weapons, apart from axes and arrowheads, and when they do start to appear, they are imports or a local imitation of Carolingian models.

periods, while Sokol attributed earth graves, wooden coffins and simple stone graves to the earliest phase.

⁵³ Z. Gunjača 1995: 161; Sokol 2006: 146 for wooden coffins. Sokol 2006: 145–6, assumed that stone architecture was in imitation of wooden coffins, brought by the Croats from their 'homeland', but it was rather a 'repossession of the past', which was wide spread fashion in late antique and early medieval societies, for different reasons of legitimisation of the power, Effros 2001, see below p. 140.

⁵⁴ See Belošević 1995 for the sarcophagi and Werner 1978/79 for St. Mary's basilica.



Picture 6: Inhumation grave with stone architecture from Velim-Velištak. Photo: Ivan Čondić, Franjo Nedved with permission of the Archaeological Museum in Zadar.

There were also some unique objects, mostly associated with the Later phase, post-775, such as finds from Ždrijac: glass from graves 310 and 322, a decorated deer-horn from grave 161, or a wooden water-vessel from grave 167. Traces of broken pottery, assumed to be the remains of

a funerary feast, were frequently detected around the graves. The 'Old-Croat' graves from the 'Pagan' horizon usually had no detectable grave-markings, discovered only recently was a stone grave-marker at Velim.⁵⁵ Skeletal remains from these cemeteries were recently used to provide convincing evidence that the quality of life in post-Roman Dalmatia was at a very low level. The skeletons from Dalmatian cemeteries showed much more signs of traumas and malnourishment when compared with the contemporary skeletons from Pannonian cemeteries and the sample from Dalmatia from Late Antiquity.⁵⁶

The work of Evans, published in 1989, which cross-examined the early medieval cemeteries in Dalmatia, Istria and Pannonia, is still unparalleled in the existing scholarship. Although new excavations in the last two decades have increased the quantity of available material, the contours of his research remain valid to be presented in the present context. The results Evans reached in observing the quantity and quality of grave-goods in Dalmatian cemeteries show a visible social equality, without clearly differentiated elite. Only in the Later (Carolingian) phase in the late 8th and early 9th centuries does the archaeological record show more easily detectable social differences, especially in the Ravni Kotari cemeteries, such as Ždrijac. However, a significant variability in graves from post-Roman Dalmatia can be noted, in regard to the regional and gender perspective. For example, there is an evident inconsistency in the ratio of furnished and unfurnished graves related to gender, varying from 14% to 100% of furnished female graves, and consistently above 70% of furnished male graves per cemetery. Gender division is emphasised in the types of grave-goods, as most goods appear only in female or male graves. The social positioning of child burials also appears peculiar, as they appear excluded from the usual representation of social and gender groups in cemeteries, especially before the 9th century.⁵⁷ The new evidence however reveals some peculiar sub-regional differences in regards to the burials of children. The cemetery at Velim showed the existence of 26 children's graves out of

⁵⁵ I am grateful to prof. Radomir Jurić, the leader of the Velim excavations, for this detail.

⁵⁶ Šlaus 2008, see also Šlaus 2006. Very few animal bones were found in the 'Old-Croat' graves, as compared with cemeteries in southern Pannonia, such as Brodski Drenovac for example (Vinski-Gasparini and Ercegović 1958: 155–9). Animal bones in Anglo-Saxon graves were recently successfully linked with a display of wealth and social status, Lee 2007: 17 ff.

⁵⁷ Evans 1989: 113–205, 177–9 (children).

118 inhumations, and two of those were neonatal burials, with 5 discovered at Donje Polje.⁵⁸ Urban cemeteries in Nin (Banovac and St. Cross) show children buried inside living quarters, some in the waste disposal, which is highly comparable to identical child burials in the Oxfordshire cemetery at Yarnton in England, from the mid-9th century, but also with intrasite burials in Eastern Europe.⁵⁹

The 'Old-Croat' cemeteries also show evidence of careful and thoughtful cemetery landscaping.⁶⁰ The cemeteries were sometimes positioned near the Iron Age mound graves (Materiza-Nin) and it is possible they were placed in the actual mound graves (unexplored Krneza-Ljubač⁶¹ and mound Straža, both near Nin). The very frequent positioning of the cemeteries was close to, or within, the ruins from antiquity (Maklinovo-Kašić, Ivoševci, Šematorij-Danilo, Vratnice-Bribir), within earlier Iron Age cemeteries (Ždrijac, Trljuge-Biljane Donje sub-locality Pržine), around churches from Late Antiquity – mostly in the hinterland (Gradac-Posušje, Podgradina-Rešetarica near Livno, Crkvina-Žitomislići, Čitluk and probably later in Cim-Mostar), or late antique cemeteries (Glavčurak-Kašić, Vratnice-Bribir). It is important to notice the prominent spatial position of significant cemeteries, such as Ždrijac-Nin, which overlooked the sea and the bay of Nin on a narrow stretch of land which was surrounded by water on three sides, or the positioning of the Mastirine-Kašić cemetery near running water, Grede-Kašić near a Roman road, and Spas-Knin on top of a steep hill.⁶² All these burial structures and landscaping of the cemeteries show a range of different issues, from a display of social status to invented traditions, which linked the deceased to a mythical timeless past, whether prehistoric or classical.⁶³

⁵⁸ R. Jurić 2007: 219, Šlaus 2006: 100.

⁵⁹ Kolega 2005: 95; Kolega and Radović 2006; Predovan 2008: 66, 74, 117–18. For Yarnton see Lee 2007: 97–8; Eastern Europe, Curta 2001a: 283 n. 60.

⁶⁰ See in general Belošević 1980; 2000: 84–5; Jelovina 1976. Mortuary landscapes of the 'Old-Croat' cemeteries have not been properly researched; see probably the first beginnings in Sokol 2006: 152–4.

⁶¹ Krneza has recently been explored: Gusar 2007.

⁶² Oreč 1982: 64–5, 77–80 T. I–III (Gradac-Posušje); Vrdoljak 1988 (Rešetarica); Bojanovski 1961 (Čitluk); Anđelić 1970 (Crkvina-Žitomislići); Leko and Anđelić 1967; Anđelić 1974: 221 (Cim). Gradac-Posušje and Rešetarica had grave-goods; Čitluk and Crkvina-Žitomislići were without grave-goods and are dated before 900. The graves in Cim have rings and earrings which can be dated before 1100 (probably 900–1000) and are characteristic of the 'Christian' horizon of the 'Old-Croat' cemeteries.

⁶³ Périn 1987: 20–1; Bradley 1987; Halsall 1995: 181–5; Williams 1997; 1998; 2004: 181 ff. See also Symonds 2009: 69–72 for an overview of the scholarship in early medieval mortuary landscapes.

The question of the presence of grave-goods and the disappearance of Christian iconography from burial rites was, in the existing literature, closely related to the problem of de-Christianisation in post-Roman Dalmatia, outside of the 'Roman' cities on the coast. Usually archaeologists assumed that the 'Pagan' horizon furnished graves showed 'Slav' arrivals that in time took on the customs of the local population and changed their funerary rites from cremation to inhumation.⁶⁴ However, this view was based on the assumption that the 'Slavs' and Croats settled in the 7th century in overwhelming numbers, and that they brought an established set of pagan beliefs from their 'homeland', as well that the domestic pre-Slavic population was already fully Christianised, so they showed their Christianity in their funerary customs. This approach was based on the old periodization of Karaman, who ascribed the custom of placing pottery vessels to the remains of 'pagan' practices amongst the settled Slavs.⁶⁵

All these assumptions are based on the 'culture-history' methodological framework and should be seriously questioned, especially when looked at in the background of more recent research into popular religion and Christianity, as well as the mortuary customs of the post-Roman West, but also when analysing data from actual cemeteries. The rising scholarly consensus is that the local variants and pluralism in understanding Christianity represent a significant characteristic of the popular religion of this period, in the West, but in Byzantium as well.⁶⁶ The fragments of ancient traditions, whether Roman or even pre-Roman, existed outside of their context in the late Roman and post-Roman West, which might be regarded more precisely as a Christian society, but with living fragments of pre-Christian beliefs. Early medieval 'paganism' was in fact a Christian literary depiction of the amorphous popular culture, which did not reject Christianity, but rather incorporated within it pieces of indigenous and immigrant non-Christian traditions. It was rather a passive aspect of Christianity ('not enough Christian') than a negation of Christianity or competition with it ('non-Christian').⁶⁷ The example of the Sirmisiani, resettled by the

⁶⁴ There is mostly agreement about this matter in the scholarship: Evans 1989: 224–66; Belošević 2000; Jarak 2002; Petrinc 2002 etc.

⁶⁵ Karaman 1940, rightly observed by Milošević 1990a: 328.

⁶⁶ Smith 2005: 222–4. Cf. Wood 1995: 253–68; Burnell and James 1999: 84–7, etc.; and for Byzantium, Haldon 1990: 327–37.

⁶⁷ Thompson 2004: 35 f. See Hen 1995: 154–206, esp. 157–62 (Gaul); Filotas 2005, esp. 12–42 (general context). It should not be forgotten that the Carolingian-era

Avars from a neighbourhood of Constantinople and a Thracian diocese to Pannonia in the late 610s or early 620s, as told in the *Miracula Sancti Demetrii*, shows an interesting example of how a completely new form of Christianity, identity-construction and outside perception appeared in only one or two generations.⁶⁸

The appearance of row-grave cemeteries and furnished burials in post-Roman Europe and their disappearance are, in the scholarship, no longer considered to be the result of 'barbarian' migrations, the mark of their ethnicity and subsequent conversion.⁶⁹ Instead, the archaeological record of furnished graves in post-Roman Europe, in particular Gaul, but also England, showed burials to exist as different active strategies of social competition, an expression of social, gender and communal identities. The grave-goods had a symbolic and ritual importance, as they helped to create a social standing and displayed wealth through the public nature of burials. They were seen as a consequence of the disintegration of earlier social structures and the rebuilding of new ones, and evidence for the shifting interactions between the elites and the clergy.⁷⁰ Symbols in the graves marked by the grave-goods have different meanings in different contexts.⁷¹ Furnished graves were not considered anti-Christian by their contemporaries, and in fact no legislation against furnishing of graves existed in Merovingian Gaul or early medieval England – the church had no interest in controlling burial rites before the Carolingian era!⁷² Grave-goods were also used to represent strictly Christian symbolics, cosmology and social status inside the Christian community in the pre-Carolingian era.⁷³ In the

intellectuals constructed 'paganism' as a category of difference, the 'Other,' in order to better define themselves and their faith, Palmer 2007.

⁶⁸ *Miracula Sancti Demetrii* 2.5, possibly the resettlement depicted in Nichephorus 10.37–41; Theophanes, 301–2 (AM 6110/AD 617/18). Lemerle 1981: 138–43; Nikolov 2000: 340–1; Pohl 1988: 278–81; Gračanin 2007b: 173–5.

⁶⁹ James 1980; Périn 1980; Halsall 1992a; 1998; Schke 1999; Lucy 2002; etc. In fact, the appearance of a furnished inhumation might be an adoption of earlier Roman customs amongst the 'Germanic' elite in their bid for legitimacy, Halsall 2000, and funerary feasting emulation of the Roman pre-Christian practices, Paxton 1996: 23.

⁷⁰ Halsall 1995b: 245–53; Tyrell 2000; Effros 2002; 2003: 119–71, 192–6; Lucy and Reynolds 2002; Williams 2006; 2007, etc.

⁷¹ Halsall 1998.

⁷² Geary 1994: 41; Burnell and James 1999: 88; see also Geake 1992: 89–90; Dierkens and Périn 1997: 82.

⁷³ Effros 1996; Innes 2000: 34–40; Thompson 2002. Frankish royal tombs in the cathedrals of Cologne and Saint Denis had food offerings and bronze vessels, Werner 1964. See also the Moravian churches in Mikulčice, and Staré Město-Uherské Hradiště also has a number of elite tombs in their naves, Schulze-Dörrlamm 1993. It was no

southeastern Adriatic cemeteries (Lissus and Svač) there is valid evidence that vessels for wine were placed in graves in a Christian context, considered to purify the grave within the supporters of iconoclasm.⁷⁴

Problems also appear when we look into some selected data from the cemeteries. The numbers of graves with grave-goods can indeed be very high, as in Maklinovo-Kašić, where 78% of graves have grave-goods. On the Other hand, at Ždrijac-Nin, 30% of the graves have no grave-goods, Velim-Velištak has 38% of inhumations without goods, Materiza-Nin 50%, and Gluvine kuće-Glavice and St. Cross-Nin (the oldest layer) have the majority of graves without grave-goods. The numbers of pottery vessels, thought to be key evidence for the presence of 'paganism' (as they were used to put food for the afterlife) should also be mentioned. There are only 142 for 334 total graves in Ždrijac, 27 for 55 graves in Maklinovo, 16 for 26 graves in Materiza, 27 for 50 inhumations in Dubravice, 50 for 118 inhumations in Velim.⁷⁵ These numbers represent only a fragment of the 'Old-Croat' cemeteries, but even at first glance they show that these cemeteries were far from having an identical approach in regard to the placement of grave-goods.

Thus, if it is not possible to detect Christianity and paganism through grave-goods, there are two questions which deserve our attention: were the 'Slav' immigrants pagan, and what do we know of indigenous Christianity outside of the Dalmatian cities? In regard to 'Slav' paganism, it is difficult to imagine that the arriving 'Slavs' and Avars were not familiar with Christianity. Some of them might have even been baptised before crossing the Danube.⁷⁶ Putting aside the question of what was 'Slav mythology', and if such a concept ever existed before the 19th century, only a very few objects from the Dalmatian cemeteries can be ascribed to 'Slav mythological iconography'.⁷⁷ Some toponyms in Dalmatia might be associated with 'Slav' paganism, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

different from the 'Old-Croat' princely mausoleum complex from St. Mary's basilica in Biskupija-Knin, which has elite tombs with grave-goods placed inside church structures, Werner 1978/79.

⁷⁴ Janković 1997: 79.

⁷⁵ Numbers from Belošević 1980; 2000; R. Jurić 2007, Z. Gunjača 1995. Some graves might have more than one pottery vessel.

⁷⁶ Curta 2005c.

⁷⁷ Čausidis 2005 presented a few zoomorphic figures from Dalmatian graves, Table III 1, 5–7 (belt tongues Biskupija-Knin and Čitluk-Sinj). There are interesting small

The other question, which is more significant to the issue of the 'paganism' of the immigrants, is: what was the Christianity of the indigenous population like. As shown in chapter 3, the cultural *habitus* of the Dalmatian hinterland in the Roman period showed significant regional influences, while Christianity only in the 5th and 6th centuries becomes more present, which resulted in unusual visual and spiritual forms that have given us the impression of a serious negotiation between regional popular beliefs from Late Antiquity, and different global trends in Christianity. The evidence for a recombination of Christian and non-Christian forms in post-Roman Dalmatia has been shown in the archaeological evidence, whether as evidence of recent Christianisation, or as evidence for a symbiosis of indigenous forms, i.e. Christianity and the arrivals. The use of grave-goods within a Christian context in the oldest row-grave cemeteries in Dalmatia was earlier mentioned for Mihaljevići and Greblje-Knin (pp. 82–3). Recently, it was plausibly argued by Milošević that the indigenous population also practiced the use of grave-goods in order to construct their Christian identity, as shown in the examples of the four late antique furnished burials with Christian iconography from the Dalmatian hinterland (Sinj, Vrbe near Glamoč and Gorica near Imotski), dated between the late 4th and early 7th centuries. It is also important to mention Christian motifs shown in the Ždrijac furnished graves – a small gilded bronze cross from grave 324, a cross on the ring from grave 326, or a small bronze cross discovered recently in a grave from Radašinovci.⁷⁸ There is also a recent study of the use of crosses on grave slabs, mainly those placed by the feet of the deceased in the *polje* of Sinj, which possibly shows a continuity of tradition with Late Antiquity.⁷⁹ The term *crkvina* (church-grounds) was frequently preserved in the Slavic toponyms in the hinterland, which referred to the churches from Late Antiquity which had no continuity of use in medieval times, implying that the population must have been aware of its purpose.⁸⁰ In fact, as argued by Grabar, and more recently by Milošević, the stone relief sculpture with ornamental and Christian motifs from the interior of Dalmatia (the churches in Bilimišće near Zenica, Mali

multiple heads statues from Bribir Čausidis 2005: Table V. 11–16, which might also be dated into the Iron Age.

⁷⁸ Milošević 2005: 457–9, see also Milošević 1990a for evidence for the use of pottery vessels in late antique graves. Ždrijac – Belošević 2007a; Radašinovci – R. Jurić 2003b.

⁷⁹ Milošević 2008.

⁸⁰ See the literature in Živković 2004: 44–5 for the interior of Dalmatia.



Picture 7: Figure from pluteus from the basilica in Dabravine-Breza, near Visoko. Zemaljski Museum, Sarajevo.

Mošunj (Kalvarija) near Travnik and Dabravine-Breza near Visoko) show significant stylistic similarities with 8th century Langobardic sculpture in Italy (Picture 7). In Grabar's opinion they should be dated in the period between the late 7th and 9th century, while Milošević narrows down the dating to mid- to late 8th century.⁸¹

⁸¹ Grabar 1974; Milošević 2003; 2004. These churches have been dated either in very late Roman, or rather the Ostrogothic period, and accordingly sculptures were

The evidence from the 'Old-Croat' cemeteries, but also a comparative perspective of furnished cemeteries from the rest of the post-Roman West, is not adequate for labelling the population outside of the Dalmatian cities as 'Christians' or 'pagans', even less as 'Slavs' or 'more/less romanised natives'. The evidence for the active practice of 'paganism' is lacking. The perception of Dalmatians as pagans in the *Liber Pontificalis* which reported on the mission of the abbot Martin from 640–642 to ransom captives from the 'pagans' in Dalmatia, (see pp. 98–9 above), was the observation of an outside observer, or a derogatory remark. The presence, but also the absence of grave-goods, their arrangement and choice showed different ways of self-definition, the representation of gender, social status, and popular beliefs shared by the narrow and wider community performing the burial. The indigenous population of post-Roman Dalmatia did not become 'pagans', what happened is that they continued to incorporate Christianity in their popular beliefs, constructing a heterogeneous set of beliefs, differing in different communities throughout the region. The ecclesiastic structures outside cities disappeared when Dalmatia ceased to be included in the political-ideological and urban framework of the Roman Empire, so that there was no religious organisation which would reinforce an ideological discourse on 'right' and 'wrong' beliefs. The heterogeneity of burial practices also showed a lack of discursive control over burial customs in this period by any social class.

Change in the mid-8th century

As stated earlier, an important shift occurs in the material record, and scholars are often in agreement with dating the beginning of the change to the late 8th century. It affected only elite male graves, while the female graves and the majority of other graves did not show significant differences from the earlier period. The dating of this change has been made easier with the appearance of Carolingian-type martial artefacts in grave-assemblages, but scholars differ as to whether the earliest

dated in the same period (Basler 1972: 78–82, 94–7, 127–34; 1990: 83–116; 1993: 61–2, 79–83; cf. Cambi 2002: 279–80 and Paškvalin 2003: 53–4, 110–25) or as late as 11th/12th century (Nikolajević 1964; J. Maksimović 1971: 41–8). Nikolajević, with somewhat changed positions, argued strongly against the views of Grabar, (Nikolajević 1975: 73–7) but the problem of the dating remains open, and similarities with the Langobardic sculpture striking, as even Basler 1972: 158 notices.

appearance should be dated to 750–800 or after c. 800.⁸² The most significant finds are horse-gear, such as spurs and weapons with belt-fittings, such as Carolingian-type swords, battle axes and long battle knives in male graves. The most important localities were again concentrated between the rivers Cetina and Zrmanja, especially in the region of Knin and Ravni Kotari, but also in Herzegovina in the hinterland. The area around Knin, in particular the village Biskupija had the majority of Carolingian finds, such as the cemetery complex at Crkvine, which included the elite mausoleum in the basilica of St. Mary. In the Ravni Kotari, the area of Nin had the most significant concentration of cemeteries from this era, such as Ždrijac, and amongst the more significant cemeteries were those near the churches of St. Cross and St. Anselmus on the island of Nin.⁸³

The finds of Carolingian swords, with a current total of 19 in Dalmatia and its hinterland, were also concentrated in the same region, the majority were either accidental finds outside of the archaeological context, or were found in destroyed graves. They appeared to be imports from Carolingian Europe; a few of them had ULFBREHT markings, a sign of their origin in the Rhineland. Three of the Petersen special type swords predated the year 800 (Morpolača-Bribir, 2 in Orlić near Knin: all from destroyed cemeteries). There were 4 type H swords made in the late 8th and early 9th centuries, and buried in the first half of the 9th century, two in graves (Rudići-Glamoč, Nin-Ždrijac - Picture 8), two were accidental finds, probably from destroyed graves (Katuni-Kreševo near Omiš, Gradac-Drniš). There were 8 type K swords, produced in the second half of the 8th century: 3 were found in the Crkvine-Biskupija elite mausoleum in the basilica of St. Mary (graves 1, 6, 8), one in a small necropolis at Crkvina-Koljanje Gornje. In the hinterland one was found in Rešetarica-Livno, Mogorjelo near Čapljina, Čairi-Stolac, and in Lika in Prozor-Otočac. The rest of the swords were dated to the later Carolingian times, after 850. A small number of swords show that they were probably too rare and too valuable to be buried, unlike spurs which appear much more abundantly in the

⁸² Vinski 1983/84: 157–62 dated imports of Carolingian weapons around 800. A different dating was shown by Giesler 1974: 528–32, who placed the earliest examples of spurs in Dalmatia in c. 775. Her opinion was recently supported by Milošević 2006.

⁸³ General overviews: Sokol 1999: 119–24; Milošević 2001, and Zekan 1994 for the hinterland.

graves, more than 42 pairs and 29 individual spurs have been published as far. They appear in the same region and most were found in the cemeteries of Crkvina-Biskupija, Crkvina-Koljanje Gornje, and Ždrijac-Nin. In the hinterland, they were found in Mogorjelo-Čapljina and Vukodol-Mostar. The spurs were either Carolingian imports, such as the luxurious gilded spurs from Crkvina-Biskupija, or more frequently, they were of domestic production and imitated the Carolingian models. Swords and spurs were often found in graves in combination with belts and belt strap ends.⁸⁴ It is also interesting to notice the appearance of coins in graves, which were more frequent in this period. Byzantine *solidi* from the mid-second part of the 8th century (Leo III, Constantine V Copronymus, and Leo IV) in the graves of elite members were frequent in this period in Biskupija, while Frankish coins from the mid-9th century were located in Ravni Kotari, all of them found in Ždrijac-Nin cemetery.⁸⁵

The change which occurred in the material record from the 'Old-Croat' graves was almost identical to the change which occurred on a much wider area surrounding the Avar qaganate, which indicated the process of increased social competition and the formation of new elites. The finds of belt strap ends and mounts, battle axes and equestrian equipment spread from the Avar qaganate through the Middle Danube, in particular in the area of the later Moravian state, but some similarities have also been noted in the palatial complex of the Bulgar rulers in Pliska. This change was dated to c. 750–780, the last phase of the late Avar period, and the use of equestrian equipment was thought to be a cheaper supplement for the Avar-style horse burials. The destruction of the qaganate in the late 700s corresponds with the appearance of Carolingian military equipment in the material record. Dalmatian swords and spurs were compared to similar finds in the Moravian cemeteries, such as Blatnica-Mikulčice, Staré Město or Pohansko-Břeclav, which showed an increased social competition and the formation of new elites in that region.⁸⁶ It is also important to notice

⁸⁴ On the Carolingian weapons in Croatia see: Giesler 1974; Vinski 1977/78; 1983; 1983/84; 1986; Jelovina 1986; Jakovac 1995/96; Bešlošević 1997: 110–12; 2007b. See also Werner 1960/61 for the finds in Mogorjelo-Čapljina and 1978/79 for Crkvina-Biskupija mausoleum. Typology of swords is used after Petersen's classification, Petersen 1919.

⁸⁵ Mirnik 2004.

⁸⁶ Curta 2006: 130–3, 143–4, 159–60. See the literature for the Carolingian swords in Moravia in Bešlošević 2007b: 410, and the recent study of the magnate courts in



Picture 8: Carolingian sword from Ždrijac-Nin cemetery. Photo: Ivan Čondić, with permission of the Archaeological Museum in Zadar.

in this context that the most elaborated phase of furnished burials in Anglo-Saxon England, which showed the intensification of rites and the increased complexity of grave-goods, corresponding with their gradual conversion.⁸⁷

Pohansko and Blatnica-Mikulčice in English with literature in Macháček 2007 and Poláček 2007, while Pliska was covered *in extenso* in 17 papers in Henig 2007b: 209–448.

⁸⁷ Lee 2007: 53–4, 101–2. Lee also emphasised that the use of pre-Roman and Roman burial sites intensified in this period, which corresponded with the most important 'Old-Croat' cemetery from this period – Ždrijac-Nin.

The display of more elaborate grave-goods in the later 8th century graves in post-Roman Dalmatia shows the reinterpretation of new, foreign symbols of power, such as weapons and equestrian equipment, inside the pre-existing cultural *habitus*, in order to legitimize and display the power of the elite. We might even assume a rise of the new hereditary elite, which replaced the structures of the earlier period with the formation of the chiefdoms, which started to compete for political dominance. The new elite showed their identity through new power-symbols which appeared more frequently in graves, and finally through embracing Christian ideology, by helping to build these churches and being buried in the vicinity of the newly made churches, in Christian rites together with their clients – more on the impact of Carolingian Christianity and the disappearance of grave-goods will be said later, (pp. 201–8).

There are few reasons to support the dating of this change in the assemblages of the ‘Old-Croat’ cemeteries before the active Frankish political involvement in the area, which occurred in the late 780s and 790s (see pp. 178–83) in the second part of the 8th century (c. 775), rather than to follow the dating of Vinski in 800 and after. The first reason is the analogy with the above mentioned changes in the material culture of the Middle Danube and the way that their elites expressed their identity in the burial context, which started to occur in 750–780. The second reason was that the dating by the key authority – Zdenko Vinski – relied on his assumption that contacts between the Croats and the Frankish army were not possible before 797, which he based chiefly on the opinion of text-based historians Šišić and Klaić, and their interpretation of the Frankish written sources.⁸⁸

*The ‘Old-Croat’ cemeteries: sameness and difference
in the post-Roman world*

Archaeological theory and explanation thus far has not considered in much depth the contextual significance of the finds from post-Roman cemeteries in Dalmatia with the burials as active communal techniques of remembrance and commemoration, a display of power relationships

⁸⁸ Vinski 1977/78: 160 n. 109, rejecting Giesler’s dating of ‘Old-Croat’ elite graves in Biskupija-Knin after 775, on account of ‘historical circumstances’. What he saw as historical circumstances (Vinski 1977/78: 163–4) was based upon the opinions of Šišić 1925: 306–7 and Klaić 1971: 172.

inside society through grave architecture, a system of signs and meanings constructed by burial practices and grave-goods, the ways in which communal and regional identities were constructed through burials, and so on. The assessment of the Dalmatian cemeteries from the post-processual perspective, which followed the pioneering work of Evans, still needs to happen, and this book unfortunately has no space for a more detailed analysis. The point argued here is quite simple – the prevailing assumption that the ‘Slavs’ and the ‘indigenous population’, or ‘Christians’ and ‘pagans’, might be detected through the existence of grave-goods, or the ways of burial in Dalmatian cemeteries, is no longer satisfactory.⁸⁹ Through the analogies with other roughly contemporary societies, we can see that rowed graveyards in post-Roman Dalmatia showed similar patterns of social transformation, as with most cemeteries in the post-Roman West. Dalmatia was part of the wider world, a world which lost its unified ideological discourse projected through the existence of the Roman Empire in the West. It was a world of ‘barbarised Christians’ and ‘Christianised barbarians’,⁹⁰ although these terms should not be used as opposed or complementary values, but as engaging and interacting parts of the cultural *habitus*.

Row-grave cemeteries in Dalmatia displayed a wider context of society-fragmentation and society-rebuilding in the post-Roman world. They also displayed a fall in the living standards and poverty, which was shown in the simplicity of the funerary customs. It is unfortunate that for the time being, we have at our disposal mostly material from the coastal area and its immediate hinterland, which left the zone of the Dinaric Alps mostly out of sight. On one hand, the 7th and most of the 8th century showed a similarity of general patterns in which individual communities in the Ravni Kotari and the Cetina valley approached the burial of their dead. Below the surface of a shared cultural *habitus*, the heterogeneity of different aspects of burial rites and the deposition of the dead revealed a complex sociological, regional-political and ethnic fragmentation in this period. These cemeteries had their specific patterns, when compared with other row-grave cemeteries in Europe, because they also displayed the identity and popular culture of the rural population in the hinterland of the Dalmatian

⁸⁹ A similar situation was in the assessment of the Istrian cemeteries, where the assumption still dominates that the indigenous population gave to ‘Slav’ immigrants an advanced ‘civilisation’, and took from them ‘pagan’ burial customs, Marušić 1967: 339, and in similar direction Levak 2007.

⁹⁰ I borrowed this phrase from Delonga 2001: 76, in a slightly different context.

cities, which was contrasted with the continuity emphasised in identity-construction amongst the Dalmatian Romani, which is discussed in the next chapter. The grave-goods composition became more complex in the late 8th century and coincided with the Carolingian expansion in the region, which offered new and more efficient tools for elite-identification, and with great probability we can assume a rise in hereditary elites occurring in this period.

The emphasis on the use and display of grave-goods may suggest that post-Roman Dalmatian communities were dominated by 'Big-men'. The use of this anthropological concept developed by Sahlins, which described political power in less-complex societies, arose through the need to differentiate between self-made charismatic war-leaders ('Great-men') and those whose power was rooted into privileged, mostly hereditary control of wealth, which can be backed up by force ('Chiefs'). 'Big-men' were therefore leaders with dominant personality who achieve power by manipulating wealth: organizing feasts, sponsoring communal work and enterprise, arbitrating disputes within the community, controlling rituals, etc.⁹¹ 'Big-men' took power in societies which did not establish a strongly stratified social ladder, and which were not dominated by war and war-leadership, but rather on displays of wealth and personal standing within the community. Curta showed that social transition occurred in the power-structure of the 'Slav' raiders in the 6th century from charismatic 'Great-men' to the 'Chiefs' in the late 6th and early 7th centuries.⁹² Evidence from the Dalmatian cemeteries does not show the presence of war leaders or hereditary elite in the post-Roman period before the Later (Carolingian) period, starting c. 775. The modest display of grave-goods and visible traces of funerary feasts show that society in post-Roman Dalmatia was led by people who derived their authority from personal influence and were not able to extend this authority to become hereditary. They were replaced with a formation of new elites after c. 775, who were represented with martial attributes and equestrian equipment in the graves, and were able to use their domination to centralize wealth and power within the region. These changes resulted in the formation of more complex polities (Chiefdoms) in Dalmatia, known as *županijas* in the late 8th century "(see below pp. 170–1).⁹³

⁹¹ Sahlins 1963, applied with great success by Curta 2001a: 325–34, and Barford 2001: 125–9 who discussed the social constitution of the Slavene society.

⁹² Curta 2001a: 311–34, cf. also Barford 2001: 125–7.

⁹³ Cf. a similar view of Pohansko-Břeclav: Macháček 2007: 493–4.

There are a few more important things to note here. First, there is no material evidence for the appearance of the 'Slavs' in the 7th century in Dalmatia, and there is no Prague type pottery in the Dalmatian cemeteries to indicate 6th and 7th century 'Slavs'. Pottery ascribed to the 'Slavs' should be dated to the 8th and 9th centuries, as it is comparable with finds from Pannonia. Secondly, the 'Old-Croat' cemeteries represent an entirely new way of recasting cultural influences from Late Antiquity; it was not a continuation, but rather a break with the earlier traditions, and the rebuilding of a new society by the indigenous population and the immigrants from the north. The use of Iron Age and localities from classical and Late Antiquity does not suggest continuity, but it was used for different purposes for the legitimisation of power and identity-construction. The 'Old-Croat' cemeteries in that regard corresponded with similar attempts in the legitimisation of power and identity-construction in neighbouring Komani-Kruja culture and Istria, and in wider sense – post-Roman Europe.

I would like to suggest that the beginning of this change should be searched for in the earliest Dalmatian row-grave cemeteries from the late 5th and 6th centuries, such as those in Greblje-Knin, Korita-Tomislavgrad, Glavčurak-Kašić and Njive-Narona, discussed below (pp. 80–4). These were the real predecessors of the early 'Old-Croat' cemeteries not in the typology of the artefacts used, or ways of burial, but because these cemeteries showed the beginnings of new ways for the active expression of identity through grave-goods of different categories: jewellery, tools, buttons, fibulae, or the position of the grave. Some categories were not present in the 'Old-Croat' culture, but others appeared, such as pottery pots, or Carolingian style weapons and equestrian equipment, depending on the chronological context. To paraphrase what Lucy said for Anglo-Saxon cemeteries – people stressed local identity by recombining deliberately generally available goods, which scholarship later saw as 'Slav' or Croat.⁹⁴ Now, the living family of the deceased had to make a choice, whether to bury the deceased with or without stone architecture, with or without wooden coffins, inhumated or cremate and which kind of grave-goods to place inside the grave. The transition from late antique material culture to the post-Roman period, characterised by the 'Old-Croat' assemblages, was accelerated by the political fragmentation. The earliest 'Old-Croat' period brought a significant plurality and freedom in expressing this

⁹⁴ Lucy 2002.

identity, which was no longer connected with late antique Christianity, as were the earliest row grave cemeteries.

Finally, as Jarak and Evans showed, material evidence from the 7th and 8th centuries did not decisively show the arrival of different ethnic groups in the late 8th/early 9th centuries, as cemeteries from the 'Pagan' horizon did not show a sudden change, which could be caused by the migration of the outside group.⁹⁵ According to the sharp observation of Evans – it is simply not possible to detect an early, middle or late migration of the Croats from the archaeological record, thus implying the existence of a unified cultural *habitus* from the 7th to 9th centuries in Dalmatia.⁹⁶ However, the opinion is right if the 'Old-Croat' culture is seen generally, for it did not take into account the dramatic changes in the ways the male elite in Dalmatia expressed its identity in the burial context, which started to occur c. 775.

The 'Old-Croat' cemeteries from the earliest phase of the 'Pagan' horizon showed a society of the post-Roman Dalmatia in transition, which rebuilt their social structures from the roots. They were the principal tools for establishing and remembering identity in non-literate, post-Roman Dalmatia, they demonstrated power, especially the ability of individuals and groups to command surplus, and their capability to entertain a retinue and resources. The cemeteries were not evidence of the 'Slav' or Croat arrivals in Dalmatia, or the disappearance of the indigenous population, nor do they show the loss of Christianity and the appearance of paganism. At the same time they displayed a sameness and difference with cemeteries in the rest of the post-Roman world. They showed similar approaches to burials as active strategies in the construction of identity, as in most of the post-Roman and early medieval cemeteries, building from late antique heritage and regional popular cultures an entirely new society. On the other hand, the 'Old-Croat' cemeteries showed the development of a distinct regional culture, different from other Adriatic cultures, such as Istria and Komani-Kruja. The beginnings of this shift into the Dalmatian burial-customs should be searched for in the 6th and early 7th century row-grave Dalmatian cemeteries, rather than explain it as a 'Slav' population 'flood' which settled there.

⁹⁵ Jarak 2002. However, recently Sokol 2006 challenged that idea, see Chapter 8.

⁹⁶ Evans 1989: 152–8.

7. THE “DARK AGES”: 7TH AND 8TH CENTURY IN POST-ROMAN DALMATIA II (BECOMING SLAVS)

The different eco-cultural regions of western Illyricum showed the existence of different models of acculturation within the Mediterranean world in pre-Roman and Roman times, so that it is today impossible to believe that late antique Dalmatia was inhabited by a culturally uniform population – ‘Romanised/semi-Romanised Illyrians’ – as they were often referred to in the earlier scholarship. The urbanised and christianised coastal communities were, to a significant degree, included in the global cultural and economical trends of the Mediterranean world, while the identities formed in their rural hinterlands and especially in the mountainous belt in the northern part of the province required different assessments. Despite significant changes which occurred on the coast, such as the dying out of some cities and the appearance of new ones, urbanisation survived there, but disappeared completely in the hinterland. The continuity and disappearance of urban infrastructures caused significant economic, social and spiritual changes, which undoubtedly affected the identities and the ways in which identities were constructed, which resulted in the appearance of ‘Roman’ identities in the surviving Dalmatian cities and ‘Slav’ identities in their hinterland in the 9th century.

Dalmatian cities: Becoming Roman (again)

We saw in chapter 5 that written evidence for the fall of Salona by the invading Slavs and Avars in the first half of the 7th century was very slim. The material evidence has made the entire discourse on the fall of Salona even more doubtful. The lack of material evidence and the continuity of habitation in the Salonitan ager influenced Rapanić, who followed in the footsteps of Vinski’s earlier research, to question the fall of Salona. Archaeology has showed a slow desertion and abandonment of Salona and a continuity of habitation in Diocletian’s palace, which predated the alleged taking of the city by the Avars and Slavs. The view that migration from Salona to the palace occurred throughout a generation or two, rather than suddenly after the alleged ‘sack’ is today

more established in the scholarship.¹ The narrative of the migration of Dalmatian Romani from Epidaurum to Ragusium from the HS reflected the same features as the narrative of the epic resettlement of the Salonitans to Spalatum, via the Dalmatian islands. However, archaeology has also shown a continuity of habitation in the area of modern Dubrovnik in Late Antiquity and a lack of evidence for the sack of Epidaurum in the 7th century.² A similar process of a slow dying out of urban structures, rather than the violent sack of Naronā, is clearly shown in the appearance of cemeteries from very Late Antiquity in central urban areas.³ The other cities in Dalmatia also do not appear to have been sacked in this period by any invaders, in particular Iader, and the scholarship is more ready to accept that Dalmatian cities were 'dying out', rather than having been sacked and destroyed by the 7th century invaders.⁴ As pointed out earlier in chapter 4, this process was known throughout the late antique world, as cities were not able to maintain urban infrastructures, urban spaces fragmented and lost their functions and transformed into other functions, such as cemeteries, and the cities slowly stagnated. The same process was observable in the south Adriatic cities, such as Dyrrachium, Buthrotum, and Lissus, which also went through the same process, but were not fully abandoned.⁵

It is difficult to ascertain the role that the Byzantine Empire played in the eastern Adriatic in the period after Heraclius and before the conflicts with the Carolingian Empire in the late 8th/early 9th centuries, mostly due to a lack of evidence in the Byzantine written sources. The Byzantines needed to maintain control over the Dalmatian islands in order to keep maritime links with the Exarchate in Ravenna open.⁶ The 'archons of the Westerners' which were mentioned by Theophanes in relation to the events from 717 and 718 might be a rare reference to the

¹ Vinski 1967; Rapanić 1980; 1995: 9–10; 2007; Marin 1988: 85–94; Goldstein 1992: 92–5; Piplović 2008. The consequence of the abandonment of Salona might be that Iader became the centre of Byzantine Dalmatia in this period, Ferluga 1978: 100–1, 146–7, 159.

² Koščak 1997: 5–27; Rapanić 1987: 67–8; 1995: 10–11; Žile 1997: 110–17; Čače 1997.

³ Buljević 1997/98, cf. Marin 1993; 1998. The appearance of burials *intra muros* is also attested for Salona in this period. See Chevalier and Mardešić 2008: 228 and the literature cited there in n. 9.

⁴ Goldstein 1992: 83–99; 1995: 115–22.

⁵ Nallbani 2007: 48–54; cf. Nallbani and Buchet 2008: 246–61 for Lissus.

⁶ Ferluga 1977; 1978: 111–17.

leaders of the Dalmatian cities in this period.⁷ There is some evidence for the probable participation of the 'Dalmatian bishops' at the Council of Hieria (the 'False' Seventh Council) in 754, and the participation of the bishops from Salona and Osor (island of Cres) at the Second council of Nicaea (=Seventh oecumenical) in 787. If reliable, this might be evidence for continued ecclesiastic connections between the Dalmatian cities and Constantinople in the 8th century.⁸ This is also indicated by the transfer of Illyricum from the ecclesiastic jurisdiction of the Pope to the jurisdiction of Constantinople, together with Calabria and Sicily, sometime after the 720s. This move, caused by the widening gulf between Rome and Constantinople and the iconoclastic dispute, may have alienated the church in the Dalmatian cities from the ecclesiastic authorities in Constantinople.⁹

The evidence for cultural and trade contacts between the Dalmatian cities and Istria with the Byzantine Empire in this period is undisputable, and in addition, finds of mostly gold coinage (only a few copper coins from the 7th century have been found) confirm those links in the 7th and 8th centuries.¹⁰ The actual political relationship between the Byzantine Exarch in Ravenna and the Dalmatian cities until the fall of Ravenna and the transfer of Istria to the Langobards in 751 remains unclear. The contacts must have been close, but this does not

⁷ Theophanes, 398 (AM 6210/AD 717/8). Živković 2002; 2007a: 218–23, who drew attention to this neglected passage, saw them as leaders of the 'Slavs'. The evidence is rather slim, and if indeed Theophanes referred to the archons in the Adriatic, they might only be leaders from the Exarchate in Ravenna and/or Dalmatian cities, but not leaders of the 'Slavs' from Dalmatia. The earliest direct evidence of the Byzantine archons is from the 9th century, Ferluga 1978: 127–36. But the archontate in Dalmatia can be assumed to have begun to exist at an earlier date. See the recent study of Prigent 2008: 408–12.

⁸ The evidence for the Council of Hieria rests on Michael the Syrian 2.520, a source from the 12th century. For the Dalmatian bishops on the Seventh council, see Darrouzes 1975: 25; Katičić 1982/83, after Mansi, *Sacrorum* 13.139–42, 366–8, 373, 387–8, 723–4, 732. Živković 2004: 58; 2007a: 410–11 recently made a convincing case that the bishops from Rab and Kotor were not at the council, which was originally believed by Darrouzes and accepted by later authorities.

⁹ The transfer of Illyricum was due to either Leo III or Constantine V – all evidence is for a late date: the earliest is 791 (*Epist. Had.* 2 p. 56–7) – see the modern literature in Haldon 1990: 90 n. 132, who rightly concluded that this move might have alienated these regions from Constantinople, Haldon 1990: 132–3, cf. Goldstein 1992: 112–26 for Dalmatia, and Živković 2004: 57–60 who dated the transfer to 752–757.

¹⁰ Cultural connections with the Empire: there is a large corpus of scholarly work, see e.g. Rapanić 1987; Jurković 1988/89. Trade: Ferluga 1987a; coinage: Mirnik and Šemrov 1997: 132–4 with literature. See also Curta 2005b for the wider perspective of Byzantine coin distribution in the 'Dark Age Balkans Peninsula'.

necessarily imply that the Dalmatian cities were under Ravenna's administration. For example, the influence of Ravenna and north Italian traditions, rather than Constantinople and the eastern part of the Empire, was clearly visible in the low relief sculpture in Dalmatia, and there is also evidence of Dalmatian-born priests in the Exarchate: the archbishop of Ravenna Damianus (692–708) and Maximus, the bishop of Gradus in Istria (648–668).¹¹ Evidence for contact might be the story of one John of Ravenna by Thomas the Archdeacon, who was allegedly sent by Pope John IV (640–642) to reorganize the Salonitan diocese as its archbishop, but today it is difficult to maintain the historicity of the story, and even of John of Ravenna himself.¹²

Although the evidence we have at our disposal is mostly consequential and indirect, it is reasonable to assume that the citizens of the Dalmatian cities still claimed allegiances to the emperor in Constantinople in this period, and were linked more with the idea of the empire rather than with the Empire itself, apart from the closer links with the Exarchate in Ravenna, which itself enjoyed a high degree of independence. It is highly probable that Istria was formed in the late 7th century as a separate Byzantine administrative unit – *kleissoura*, with its own troops, under the command of the local *magister militum*.¹³ There are some indications that the same could have happened with Salona in the 7th century.¹⁴ The thalassocracy of the Byzantine navy in the Adriatic, as argued by Ferluga and Goldstein, should not be over exaggerated at this time. First, as the Byzantines considered the navy secondary to the infantry and needed strong land forces to support the navy with success. Secondly, it is obvious that no Dalmatian city played a significant role as a Byzantine port in this period, for there is a notable lack of petty copper coinage, which would show regular payments to the sailors in the 8th century on the eastern Adriatic coast.¹⁵

¹¹ The links between Italy and Dalmatia: Sheppard 1984. The Exarchate and Dalmatia: Šišić 1925: 280; Ferluga 1978: 122–6; Goldstein 1992: 136–7. Damianus: Agnellus, 134; Maximus: *Chron. Venet.* 2; *Danduli Chron.* 6.8.

¹² HS 11–12(52–6), Matijević-Sokol 2003: 75–114. John of Ravenna has caused numerous scholarly discussions for and against his historicity; see Klaić 1971: 122–5, 238; Goldstein 1992: 134–6; 1995: 135–8; Budak 1994: 83–5; Živković 2007a: 206–7.

¹³ Ferluga 1978: 87–164; Goldstein 1992: 132–49; 1996a; 1998; Istria: Ferluga 1987b; 1992; Margetić 1992; Vicolja-Matijašić 2005; Novak 2005.

¹⁴ Curta 2004c: 527. The settlement, including late antique fortifications, overlooking Salona and Split is called Klis. See the discussion in Lončar 2002: 150–6 on the meaning of the word *kleissoura* in the DAI 29.30.

¹⁵ E.g. Ferluga 1978: 117; Goldstein 1998: 10. Pryor and Jeffreys 2006: 389–91, 451 (Byzantine naval strategy); Curta 2005b: 122–3 (coinage). The Sicilian fleet might have been responsible for the Adriatic in this period, Prigent 2008: 394–8.

Nevertheless, the importance of the eastern Adriatic coast for navigation and communications with Ravenna must not be disregarded, as favourable natural characteristics enabled it to be the main naval traffic corridor through the Adriatic, while the western Italian coast was used only for local navigation until the last few centuries.¹⁶

The stories of the sack of the Dalmatian cities by invaders from the north were simply the way in which the medieval population tried to explain their past. No Dalmatian coastal city was sacked in the 7th century by Avar and Slav armies. We can safely assume that the migrant groups of 'Slavs' lacked in numbers, as well as an efficient political and military organisation and were not able to use the weak and exposed position of the Dalmatian cities to capture them, after the political and military withdrawal of the Byzantines from Dalmatia. The transformation, which occurred there, was no different than from other parts of the post-Roman world, including the slow abandonment of cities and the ruralisation of the landscape. As Liebeschuetz suggested in his encompassing study, the decline of late Roman cities was a long-time trend, with observable regional differences, caused principally by social and political changes. The changing structure of the city-government, a general lack of security, the breakdown of the imperial city-based system of taxation and the rise of Christianity, meant that the cities were unable to maintain a complex urban infrastructure from the earlier period.¹⁷ Some Dalmatian cities slowly diminished in importance and died out, such as Narona, some were relocated, such as Salona/Spalatum and Epidaurum/Ragusium, while others contracted and survived into medieval times, such as Iader, Pola, Parentium and Tragurium.¹⁸ The reasons for the abandonment of some of those cities are numerous and the outbreak of Justinian's plague in the mid-6th century was proposed as one of them,¹⁹ but it can also be traced into the social transition, and in the observable process of urban fragmentation in late antique Dalmatia.

¹⁶ Kozličić 2000; Jurišić 2000: 47–51; Kozličić and Bratanić 2006.

¹⁷ Liebeschuetz 2001, emphasising the decline of the city. This process can also be seen as a transformation; Ward-Perkins 1997.

¹⁸ Suić 1976: 234–47; 1999: 103–6; Rapanić 1987: 64–73; Karač 1995: 288–90.

¹⁹ Goldstein 1992: 65–7, cf. Grmek 1998. The plague might have reached Illyricum and Dalmatia in 543, Stathakopoulos 2004: 115, but the real extent of depopulation is difficult to ascertain, Horden 2005: 153–6; Liebeschuetz 2001: 53–4, 391–2, although there is good evidence that the quality of life in Dalmatia deteriorated fast in the transition to early medieval times, Šlaus 2008. The outbreaks of the 'Black Death' in medieval times were usually followed by demographic growth.

The recent research of Jakšić points out some additional possibilities regarding Byzantine involvement in post-Roman Dalmatia. According to him, the survival of Christian architecture from Late Antiquity to early medieval times in the Ravni Kotari was linked with the fortified places from antiquity and the burials with the Byzantine golden star-shaped earrings. These fortified points link Nin and Zadar with the upper flow of the rivers Krka and Knin, stretching out on the northern side of the Ravni Kotari. Jakšić suggested that the soldiers under the Eastern Roman/Byzantine command linked Nin and Zadar with Knin, thus protecting Ravni Kotari with a chain of fortifications in the 7th century, and maintained some kind of military control throughout the Dark Ages.²⁰ A similar suggestion has been made of the plains around Sinj, which are connected with Salona and the Bay of Kašteli via the pass of Klis.²¹ The idea is reminiscent of the proposal (p. 86 above) that the beginnings of the Komani-Kruja society should be searched for amongst the Eastern Roman soldiers, permanently settled with their families in small garrisons and forts.²² This is an interesting view, which does need more research and archaeological confirmation, especially taking into account that the early 'Old-Croat' graves from the region do lack the military equipment visible in Komani-Kruja graves. However, the idea that the fortifications filled with Eastern Roman/Byzantine soldiers and their families from the early to mid-7th century were transforming into independent clans led by 'Big-men', which would dominate the Ravni Kotari in the 8th century, seems very appealing.

The partial abandonment of Dalmatian cities by the Byzantine military and navy after Heraclius' age in the long run resulted in the establishment of a new 'Roman' identity. The Romani from the Dalmatian littoral did not become Slavs, but they also did not become Byzantine *Romaioi*. A good example of a personal narrative which reflected this identity in the 13th century was the *Historia Salonitana* of the Archdeacon Thomas of Spalatum, but their identity-discourses were also prominent in the 'Roman' narratives of the past preserved in

²⁰ Jakšić 2008, based also on research of the Christian architecture surviving from antiquity to early medieval times from Jakšić 1995.

²¹ Milošević 1997: 120–1; see also Milošević 2008.

²² Curta 2006: 103–5. It also corresponds with the above mentioned idea that the East Romans/Byzantines established in the 7th century military-administrative regions (*kleissoura*) under the *magistri militum* at other points on the eastern Adriatic, such as Salona.

chapters 29 and 31 of the DAI.²³ A new identity ideologically draws inspiration from imaginary links with antiquity, especially through the urbanistic continuity of Iader and the ‘continuity’ between ancient Salona and medieval Spalatum, or Epidaurum and Ragusium. The Dalmatian Romani were mostly city-dwellers, who positioned themselves towards the inhabitants of the hinterland as the ‘rightful’ custodians of ancient culture and tradition. The ideological emphasis on the cultural and biological ‘connections’ with Roman times, traces of which we can see in the DAI, played the most significant influence in the construction of this identity, but in its essence, medieval ‘Romanness’ in Dalmatia was a whole new identity, which continued to transform further into the later period.²⁴

Language-shift

The most obvious evidence of identity-transition was through linguistic change. The members of the elite of early medieval Dalmatia, outside of the coastal cities, had ‘Slav’ names, and spoke the Slavic language, when they appeared in the written and epigraphic sources of the 9th century. The spread of Slavic language in post-Roman Dalmatia remains an obscure and insufficiently explained process. The Common Slavic language is difficult to trace before the 8th century, although some scholars, such as Šimunović, believed that its appearance in Dalmatia appeared evident after c. 650, and ascribed its appearance and dispersal to the migration of the ‘Slavs’.²⁵

Remarkably little is known about the language of the pre-Slavic population. What is known is based on toponyms, indigenous names which derived mainly from inscriptions from the Roman period and presumed links of an ‘Illyrian’ language with the Albanian language, which are not fully clear, and are far from conclusive.²⁶ Scholarship assumes, with strong reasons, that the indigenous population

²³ See above, chapter 5.

²⁴ DAI, 29.14–53; 31.11–15; 33.3–4; 35; 36.3–5. On the Dalmatian ‘Romans’: Jireček 1901–04; Skok 1950. Goldstein 2005b rightly saw the urban structures as a continuity with antiquity in the Dalmatian cities, but did make an odd observations that the “*young barbarian society*” in the hinterland “*did not have strength to build cities*”, apart from Nin, Goldstein 2005b: 204, 211.

²⁵ Lunt 1997. For the appearance and expansion of the Slavic language in the region through toponyms, cf. Šimunović 1976; 1999: 401–12.

²⁶ Mayer 1957–59; Katičić 1976: 154–88.

gradually adopted Latin as its native tongue some time after the Roman conquest. However, the use of Latin within the Empire was significantly diversified, so we can assume that inhabitants of Roman Dalmatia spoke a variety of different dialects of Latin, affected by their social class, as well as micro- and macro-regional factors.²⁷ The dialect of late antique Latin was spoken in post-Roman Dalmatian cities, and Latin speakers also existed at the court of the Croat duke Trpimir in the 9th century, and spoke a form of Latin which was similar to the dialect spoken by the Romani from the coastal cities, according to the testimony of the travelling monk and theologian Godescalc (Gottschalk).²⁸

The disappearance of Balkan Latin and the spread of the Slavic language and toponyms were, in the earlier scholarship, explained by the 'Slav' migration and the settlement and extermination of the pre-Slavic population. The first aspect of this idea, that the Slavic language was dispersed through 'Slav' migrations from a hypothetical homeland, is today difficult to maintain. Lunt was probably the first scholar to ask the right question – how is it possible to maintain a language of high cohesiveness, such as Common Slavic, if it was dispersed through chaotic migrations? The spread of language through the migrations would result with language differentiations, not unification.²⁹ New views have emerged in recent decades. Some linguists see the spread of Slavic language through the contact, cultural and linguistic convergence and acculturation rather than through long-distance migration of the large group.³⁰ It was also recently proposed that Common Slavic was spread by the new elites and the rise of literacy in the period from the 9th to 11th centuries.³¹ The other view is based on the assumptions of Pritsak, that the Common Slavic language was spread as a *lingua franca*

²⁷ On the diversification of Latin in antiquity and Late Antiquity, see Adams 2007.

²⁸ Godescalc, *De praedestinatione* 6.

²⁹ Lunt 1984/85; 1985. Adding to that is the statement of Birnbaum that no speakers of Slavic existed before the period of the Great Migrations in Late Antiquity, Birnbaum 1990: 23.

³⁰ Nichols 1993; Milich 1995. Milich in his dissertation saw the Slav migrations in Renfrew's demography-subsistence model, as short-distance movements of agriculturalists who introduced a new subsistence technology into the North of the Balkan Peninsula (Carpathian Arc), shifting the primary food production from cattle ranching to cereal production, and causing demographic growth. The spread of the Slavic language would be in his view a secondary consequence of these changes, implying the view that the Slavs become Slavs by acquiring Slavic.

³¹ Barford 2008.

throughout the Avar qaganate, and that its spread to Bohemia and Poland must be ascribed chiefly to the expansion of Avar political influences in the 8th century. Thus, the spread of Common Slavic can be explained through its use as a *koine* of the Avar qaganate, or those communities that were connected with it, and its later use as a *koine* of the Bulgar Empire. The political framework of the qaganate in which Common Slavic was spread, would explain the unified structure of the later Church-Slavonic language, which was largely based on Common Slavic.³²

Common Slavic showed mainly the characteristics of being a second language for its speakers, a contact language characterized by frequent code-switching and adoption of patterns from existing languages.³³ Therefore, what is today called 'Common Slavic' by linguists would represent a part of the cultural *habitus* of the trans-Danubian population, the expansion of which was enabled inside the political frameworks of the Avar qaganate and later the Bulgar polity. In the context of linguistic problems in post-Roman Dalmatia, it is very significant to take into account the heterogeneity of the wider linguistic picture in this period, which showed the complexity and irregularity of the interaction between terms such as 'language', 'cultural *habitus*', 'political identity' and 'ethnicity'.

"We must dismiss the nineteenth-century misconception that there ever existed a matching relationship of one people or polity to one language. Equally erroneous is the notion that there was linguistic uniformity within any medieval group that regarded itself as constituting a single people or nation, ..., languages did not start and stop at political frontiers: they overlapped in various ways that took no account of political allegiances".³⁴

While, indeed, we can accept that groups of Slavophone migrants found their way to post-Roman Dalmatia, the linguistic change should be explained in a different framework from the earlier assumptions that the Slavic language was spread through the mass-scale migrations of the 'Slavs'. A number of linguistic shifts in history occurred without wide-scale population movements, and were driven by a numerically small elite.³⁵ A good example of such a linguistic shift was the spread of

³² Lunt 1984/85: 421–2; 1985: 203, who followed the earlier ideas of Pritsak 1983: 419–22. This idea was accepted and elaborated on by Curta 2001a: 344–6; 2004a.

³³ Curta 2004a: 134–42.

³⁴ Smith 2005: 14–50, quote from 17.

³⁵ Anthony 1995: 562–3 with relevant literature.

the Indo-European language in prehistory, which was not driven by a large-scale demographic change, but by small elite groups.³⁶ However, it is difficult to believe that the spread of a Slavic language in post-Roman Dalmatia was caused by the migration of the numerically small elite, as the material record from the 'Old-Croat' cemeteries showed an absence of more clearly defined elite-identities before the last quarter of the 8th century, as discussed in chapter 6.

More recent and better documented is the spread of the Latin language amongst indigenous populations in the western parts of the Empire, including Illyricum. Latin almost entirely replaced the earlier indigenous languages in just a few generations, at all levels – from commoners to elites. However, it might be assumed that different regions spoke Latin in different ways: regional elites emulated Roman Latin in order to legitimize their position of social dominance in the new political order, while the rest of the population developed their own dialects of Latin. The disappearance of Latin as a spoken language in post-Roman Europe can be explained in the same framework – no one had reason to maintain Latin as a living language, so the diversified regional varieties of Latin became codified as Romance languages, and Latin was preserved amongst the intellectual elite and inside the church. Banniard brought in the direct relationship between the loss of spoken Latin in Francia after 650, with wide-spread illiteracy, he also suggested that in the century between 650 and 750 the common people lost their active knowledge and in another century their passive knowledge, maintaining only a contact with the grammatical basics of Latin.³⁷

This other model appears more applicable to post-Roman Dalmatia. We can assume that a similar process to Francia occurred in post-Roman Dalmatia outside of the Dalmatian cities after 650, which resulted in the gradual disappearance of Latin. There was no interest in maintaining late antique Balkan Latin as a spoken language in the Dalmatian hinterland, there was no distinctive elite, such as a hereditary nobility or an ecclesiastic organization, which would maintain spoken Latin as a tool to legitimize their power. In fact, as the region became the periphery of an Avar cultural continuum, the use of the

³⁶ E.g. Renfrew 1987; Robb 1993; Nichols 1998, see the balanced approach in Anthony 1995.

³⁷ Banniard 1992: 519–33, with similar, but a slightly later process in Spain and Italy 1992: 544–61.

Slavic *lingua franca* may reveal a much better tool of social strategy and communication from provincial Latin. However, the acceptance of Slavic language in Dalmatia was conducted in very specific ways by indigenous population, who integrated patterns of their native Balkan Latin into Slavic dialects and languages, as postulated long time ago by Brozović.³⁸

In coastal Dalmatia, the acceptance of Slavic over the Latin language might also be in opposition to the Romance-speaking Romani in the Dalmatian cities. That aspect we might also see in the later conflict between the 'Roman' ecclesiastic structures and some circles inside the Croat kingdom, whether the language of liturgy should be Latin or Church-Slavonic, in the 11th century.³⁹ We have no sources to help us determine how wide-spread was the use of Slavic in Dalmatia before the 11th century, when inscriptions in the Slavic, Glagolitic script, started to appear in the Northern Adriatic islands and in the wider region of Dubrovnik.⁴⁰ The disappearance of provincial Latin was not absolute. The population which inhabited the coastal contact zone with Latin around the Dalmatian cities was certainly bilingual, which we saw from Godescalc's comment on the use of spoken Latin in the court of the Croat duke Trpimir in the mid-9th century, but also the bilingual inscription dated in the 11th century from the Valun tablet discovered on the north Adriatic island of Cres, written in Latin and Slavic, which was inscribed in rounded Glagolitic script.⁴¹

Toponyms and 'Slavic religion'

Closely related to the question of the spread of language is the appearance of toponyms in Dalmatia which were associated with

³⁸ Brozović 1969, esp. 136.

³⁹ CD 1.22,24, making some authorities such as Budak 1994: 128–30, or Fine 2006: 54–6 to date it in the background of the conflict between the Croat bishop of Nin and Spalatin ecclesiastic authorities in the 920s (CD 1.23–7). The source is unreliable HSM, the extended version of HS. The conflict in the 920s was about jurisdiction, not the language of the liturgy, and thus we have no evidence for the spread of the Church-Slavonic liturgy in Dalmatia so early, Klaić 1971: 294–304; Hercigonja 1999: 376–80; Curta 2006: 196–8. In the original version, Thomas dated the conflict about language to the 1060s; HS 16(76–86); cf. the letter of Pope Alexander II, who supported the decision of the Spalatin council, CD 1.67.

⁴⁰ Two finds of glagolitic inscription in the region south of Dubrovnik: one in Konavli: Fučić and Kapetanić 1999 and another in Župa Dubrovačka M. Perkić 2008: 87–8, 91, dated to the 11th century (Konavli) or late 11th/early 12th centuries (Župa Dubrovačka) do suggest the spread of Church-Slavonic liturgy through the so-called south route, confirming the idea of Budak 1994: 128–35.

'Slavic mythology', such as Perunsko, Perun, Perunac, Perunovac and Perunić which were connected with the god Perun (Перунъ) and Mokošica in Rijeka Dubrovačka near Dubrovnik with divinity called Mokoš (Мокошь). It is also popular to assume connections of St. Eliah (Ilija) or St. Vitus (Vid) with Perun, St. George (Juraj) with Jarylo (Jarovit, Ярыло), the Virgin Mary or other female saints with Morana/Mara or Mokoš, and St. Blaisus (Vlaho) with Veles (Weles, Volos, Велесъ/Волось) as an *interpretatio Christiana* of the 'Slavic religion'.⁴² The Slovenian scholar Pleterski postulated the existence of a so-called 'Sacred triangle of the Slavs'. He argued that there were examples in the eastern Alps where significant points in space, such as mountain tops, holy places, or churches, which could be connected with 'Slavic religion', were visually connected, forming visual triangles.⁴³ This opinion is accepted amongst some ethnologists in Croatia, who located 15 such triangles: 6 north of the river Sava, 1 in Istria, 2 on the border of Istria and Dalmatia and only 6 in Dalmatia (4 on the coast, 1 on the island of Pag and 1 in the hinterland).⁴⁴ Some spaces, such as the hill Perun over Mošćenica-Mošćenička Draga in Istria were also assumed to be a 'pagan Slavic sanctuary', on account of ethnological and topographic evidence.⁴⁵

There are numerous caveats regarding the search for 'Slavs' and 'Slavic religion' in toponyms. The discourse on 'Slavic religion' is a modern construct, based on a wide variety of different sources. Knowledge of the beliefs ascribed to the 'Slavs' is based on a patchwork of written evidence from different periods which relate to different regions, such as when Procopius described the beliefs of the 'Sclavenes' from the 6th century, evidence deriving from the 11th and 12th century missionaries working with the Polabians in the works of Thietmar of Merseberg, Adam of Bremen, Saxo Grammaticus, etc., as well as the *Primary Chronicle* and the Arab authors which were related to the beliefs in Russia. In addition, there is the ethnographic material of the

⁴¹ Fučić 1999: 264–5.

⁴² See recently Crnković 1994; Belaj 2007; 2009, and in wider context, Čausidis 1994; Katičić 2008. For the Slavic religious systems the bibliography is significant, the most famous work is probably Lowmianski 1979; see Barford 2001: 309–10 for essential bibliography.

⁴³ Pleterski 1996; 2009.

⁴⁴ E.g. Belaj 2006; 2008; Belaj and Šantek 2006; Šantek 2009. See Belaj 2009: 193–4 for 14 spatial triangles in Croatia, which should be supplemented with one in Vareš in central Bosnia.

⁴⁵ Katičić 2006.

popular religion from the countryside of the Slav-speaking peoples, collected in the 18th and 19th centuries. As Barford pointed out, our historical sources were not objective observers, they were hostile to the object of their observation, either as the Arabs who had a distaste for paganism, Christian missionaries whose mission was to convert the 'pagans', and finally Procopius, who saw the religious beliefs of the Sclavenes of his times through the prism of Graeco-Roman discourse on barbarians. Furthermore, ethnographic research from the 18th and 19th centuries did not show fossilised traces of 'pagan' beliefs, but lively and constantly evolving popular beliefs, which might have nothing to do with pre-Christian beliefs.⁴⁶ In addition, a significant degree of borrowing and similarities between 'Slavic religion' and other religious/spiritual systems, such as 'Germanic' or Sarmatian,⁴⁷ might suggest that, what modern scholars call 'Slav religion', are in the fact shared popular beliefs of the trans-Danubian population.

As stated earlier, it was frequently assumed that some toponyms provided sufficient evidence for the Slavic settlement and the existence of Slavic pagan cults. One such example was the cult of Svantovit (Swantovít, Svetovid, Świętowit, Svevid), which was assumed to have survived in the cult of St. Vitus (Vid), on the Adriatic coast. However, a new contextual analysis of the apparent survival of Svantovit shows that the spread of the cult of St. Vitus in the Adriatic region occurred either too late, or as a supplement for the late antique cult of St. Vitalis, not as an *interpretatio Christiana* of the Slavic pagan cult.⁴⁸ This analysis of Burić, although he remained careful not to exclude fully the existence of Svantovit's cult, casts doubts into the interpretation of toponyms as 'Slavic'.

With the present state of the evidence it remains difficult, if not impossible, to prove the existence of organized Slavic cults in post-Roman and early medieval Dalmatia. The idea of sacred Slav triangles in the Alps and Croatia is interesting, but rests on very shaky topographic evidence and the numerous assumptions about the 'Slav religion', without real hard evidence presented. We can assume, with a level of certainty, that immigrant groups from the north, which arrived between the 7th and 9th centuries, brought some ancestral traditions

⁴⁶ See Barford 2001: 188 ff. for a critical approach to the earlier studies.

⁴⁷ Barford 2001: 194.

⁴⁸ Burić 2005, also Belaj 2009: 182–8, who also criticised the idea that St. Vitus replaced Svantovit in Dalmatia.

into Dalmatia. The surviving toponyms associated with Perun or Mokoš may represent evidence for that. However, these traditions could not exist in isolation. Already, in the first generation, they must have been affected by the regional versions of Christianity and the popular beliefs which existed in the areas in which the immigrants settled in. The fragments of those ancestral beliefs, which the scholarship has codified into a modern construct of 'Slav religion/mythology', existed in Dalmatia outside of the context in which they were originally developed, and were not the expression of a unified 'Slavic' mythological-religious complex, but rather evidence of acculturation, and the construction of a unique spiritual life existing in post-Roman Dalmatia, before the arrival of Carolingian missionaries.

The Avar 'cultural continuum'

Byzantine and northern Italian contact and cultural influences appear to be the most significant for the Dalmatian cities that were trying to survive in the post-Roman period. However, for the hinterland and the development of early medieval Croat identity, these influences did not appear to be as significant, although they should be taken into account. In light of the above mentioned idea that the spread of the Slavic language was directly related to the Avar qaganate, it appears much more important to assess the influence of a cultural-political 'continuum' which developed around the Avar polity, especially in the era of the second qaganate (670–800) in the central-European plains.

The archaeology shows the appearance of a central-European cultural 'continuum' in the late 7th and 8th centuries, between the Carpathian mountains, Italy, the Black Sea and the Balkan Peninsula, whose nexus became a political framework of the second Avar qaganate, formed c. 670. This term corresponds with the term *Avaria* which appeared in the Langobard and later Frankish cognitive political geography of the mid-8th century, the earliest was recorded in the law of the Langobardic king Ratchis from 746.⁴⁹ There is no doubt that *Avaria* represents a geographical and political term, a perception of the 'Other', with its political heartland in the Pannonian plains. It is worthwhile

⁴⁹ *Avaria*: *Leges* 9; *Epist. Caroli* 20.17; *Alc. Ep.* 112.17, 146.5; Štih 2000: 357–8; archaeology: Bálint 2000; Daim 2000; 2003: 516–23, emphasising the strong cultural influences of the Byzantine world in this 'continuum'.

mentioning that 'Avarness' appears to be nothing more than a relative term, the Avars were 'Avars' only inside the political framework of the qaganate; outside the qaganate, the perception changed according to the social context, so that as 'Avars' they were only seen as cavalry or as nomads, 'Slavs' as peasants, 'Bulgars' as warriors etc.⁵⁰

The Avar 'continuum' was touching Dalmatia in its southernmost part, southern Pannonia between the rivers Sava and Drava. Archaeology does not show an Avar and Slav population 'flood' of this area either, in the period between 7th and 9th century. Archaeological finds in south Pannonia associated with the Avars or Slavs are more modest than should be expected. They are based on discovery of the 'Slav' pottery, fibulae, and weapons, sporadic 'Avar' finds and traces of cultural continuity with the pre-migration population.⁵¹ The recent discovery of late 7th/8th century cremations in Vinkovci, which were attributed to the 'Slavs' by researchers using a 'culture-history' methodological framework, in fact underlined a curious absence, rather than a presence, of the 'Slavs' in the material culture of southern Pannonia.⁵²

In fact, more recent research has shown valid evidence of the survival of the population in the heart of the qaganate in the Pannonian plains, which continued to show their identity with the use of artefacts associated with pre-Avar material culture, such as late antique Roman or 'Germanic', before forming a specific regional culture in the Middle Avar I period.⁵³ It is difficult to recognise an exclusive 'Avarness' or 'Slavness' in the material evidence, but rather to see a common trans-Danubian cultural *habitus* of the 'Slavs', or a spread and selective acceptance of that *habitus* from the indigenous population. The written evidence of a Carolingian political arrival in southern Pannonia showed Siscia as an important existing regional centre of power. It was assumed by Tomičić to be a centre of poliethnic political formation which came into existence inside the Avar 'continuum', short time before its destruction in the late 8th century.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Pohl 2003: 584–8; 1995: 214–15.

⁵¹ Sokol 1999: 117–19, cf. Evans 1989: 164–205. See also Tomičić 2001: 42–6; Rapanić 2001: 30–2, 36–7, and Filipec 2002/03 for the 'Avar' finds.

⁵² Sekelj Ivančan and Tkalčec 2006.

⁵³ Vida 2007, esp. 31–8; Stadler 2007: 59–79. Cf. *Hist. Lang.* 4.37 mentioning the 'Pannonii' inside the qaganate.

⁵⁴ Tomičić 2000: 294–7.

Direct influences of the Avar material culture were rare in post-Roman Dalmatia, in the matter of typology and style of objects found in graves. However, the analysis of Evans showed remarkable similarities in the frequency of the categories of the grave goods between the Avar 'continuum' and post-Roman Dalmatia. Probably the most significant point developed in his research is that the 'Old-Croat' culture which was represented in the Dalmatian cemeteries from the 7th to 9th centuries showed the most significant degree of correspondence with the Avar culture in the frequency of the categories he used: jewellery, weapons, horse-gear, tools and pottery.⁵⁵ To this, we should add new views on the dating of 'Slav' pottery in post-Roman Dalmatia by Curta and Sokol in the times of the second qaganate, on account of its typological similarities with the Late Avar and post-Avar pottery assemblages. Sokol showed convincingly that 'Slav' pottery from 'Old-Croat' cemeteries was not Prague type pottery, which was dated to the 5th/6th and 7th centuries.⁵⁶ According to Belošević, there were two types of pottery found in the 'Old-Croat' cemeteries: 'Slav' (oval- and egg-shaped vessels) dated to the second half of the 8th and 9th centuries, and the type he called 'special/peculiar shapes pottery' (*keramika posebnih oblika*), which resembled Eastern Roman/Byzantine pottery from Late Antiquity (pots with handles), and was dated to the late 7th and 8th centuries.⁵⁷ This dating of 'Slav' pottery showed clearly that the influences detectable in the material culture from the 'Avar continuum' appeared only after the year 700 in coastal Dalmatia and in its hinterland, a whole century after the Eastern Roman withdrawal.

It is reasonable to postulate that the structures of the qaganate remained the basis of the political organisation in western Illyricum, regardless of the degree of political links between the western Balkan 'periphery' with the core of Avar identity in Pannonia.⁵⁸ The institution of *ban* amongst the Croats and *župan*, which appeared amongst the 'Slavs', are interesting examples of the Avar political and cultural

⁵⁵ Evans 1989: 113–47, including the cemeteries with Carolingian influences from the later 8th and 9th centuries.

⁵⁶ Curta 2001a: 234; Sokol 2006: 164–6, see above, pp. 89 and 133.

⁵⁷ Belošević 1980: 109–15, cf. Brusić 1980 who compared pottery from Kašić, Stankovci and Nin with late antique underwater finds from the eastern Adriatic, which were attributed to Byzantine workshops, and Karaman 1956: 107–8, who argued that 'Slav' pottery in Croatia was not necessarily 'Slav'.

⁵⁸ In all certainty, most of post-Roman Dalmatia was left to its own devices and its own regional structures, cf. the similar situation in the upper flow of the Sava river, Štih 2000: 363–8.

impact.⁵⁹ The evidence of *župans* being 'Slav' institutions are, in the best case, very sparse. It appears that they were linked to the appearance of 'Slavs' in the sources and it is evident that this institution in time evolved from warrior leaders to provincial administrators and court bureaucracy.⁶⁰ On the other hand, it is very important to stress that the system of regions (*županijas*) in the Croat kingdom in many ways corresponded with the late antique administrative-territorial and ecclesiastic structure.⁶¹ Therefore, we may say that the institution of *županija* in Dalmatia showed a gradual process of acculturation between the existing post-Roman infrastructure and new political relations that were made by the influences from the 'Avar' cultural-political 'continuum' in Pannonia.⁶² They also showed the change of power-structures which passed from the Dalmatian 'Big-men' of the late 7th and early 8th centuries, to the more centralized power in the regional chiefdoms and appearance of hereditary nobility in the later 8th century.

Becoming Slavs?

The extent of depopulation amongst the post-Roman population of Illyricum is difficult to be ascertained and was varied in different regions, but the number and density of researched cemeteries in coastal Dalmatia did not show a significant degree of depopulation. Material from these cemeteries also did not show evidence for dramatic demographic changes, but rather a cultural and social transformation of the late antique society, which was comparable to other parts of the post-Roman West. As argued above, the language shift and the appearance of a Slavic language was also not decisive evidence for a demographic change, as previously thought. Thus, we have established a strong position for stating that the 'empty house' of Rački was not so empty, and that large-scale migration was not the major reason for the appearance of 'Slavs' in the written sources for early medieval Dalmatia. While the

⁵⁹ The word *župan* as Avaro-Turkic, Wolfram 1987: 352 ff., cf. Pohl 1988: 305; 1995: 220; Evans 1989: 271–2.

⁶⁰ DAI, 29.67; Zhekov 2003: 84–8, 91–2; Smiljanić 2007. See Smiljanić 2007: 34–5 n. 2 for extensive bibliography on the subject.

⁶¹ Smiljanić 1990.

⁶² Evans 1989: 267–76. According to Evans, *župans* controlled areas with a radius of c. 90 km.

possibility of the arrival of immigrant groups from the north can be accepted without any doubts, there is nothing to suggest that post-Roman Dalmatia was swamped by a 'Slav' tidal wave in the 7th or 8th centuries, which physically replaced the earlier population. That leaves only one reasonable explanation for the appearance of the 'Slavs', which was an identity-shift, but also a gradual linguistic shift of the indigenous population from Late Antiquity to early medieval times. Chapters 6 and 7 explored evidence for this shift, but it must be stated that the reasons why the indigenous population in post-Roman Dalmatia were 'becoming Slav' still remains, in many ways, obscure, as does the mechanism of this transformation.

Pohl's idea that 'Slavs' were in fact an ideology which offered a specific model of social equality and increased income from agricultural production and untaxed by state institutions has been very effectively refuted by Curta's criticism of the model of 'democracy' amongst the Sclavenes, which showed the appearance of competition amongst Sclavene leaders in the 6th and early 7th centuries, as well as their ways of self-definition through warrior attributes.⁶³ It seems possible that we can compare the situation in the Dalmatian hinterland with post-Roman England, where the Briton population became Anglosaxonised because it could not maintain a cultural-ideological discourse that would be attractive for the arrivals to adopt; while the political and practical benefits that emerged from a change of identity were much more attractive to the indigenous population.⁶⁴ Roman identity was impossible to maintain outside of the framework of the surviving Roman political infrastructure, as it was in Italy, Gaul or Spain, where the infrastructure survived, while the return to pre-Roman identities was absurd and impossible after centuries of acculturation with the Mediterranean world.

The development of a new 'Roman' identity in the Dalmatian cities was a key process for the understanding of the new identities from the hinterland, as in the process of its construction it excluded the remainders of the population that inhabited the Dalmatian hinterland. The division of the Romani and 'Others' reflects the reorganisation of pre-Slavic identities and the decisive change in ideological discourses upon

⁶³ Pohl 1988: 94–127; Curta 2001a: 311–34.

⁶⁴ The 'anglosaxonisation' of the Britons in England, where the ratio was assumed to be 4:1 in favour of the natives who still accepted the identity of the arrivals, Ward-Perkins 2000, esp. 521–33; Moorhead 2001: 103–9.

which these identities rested. 'Roman' identity attempted to emulate a late antique, rigidly stratified society. However, the late antique elite in the hinterland, which also existed inside frameworks of stratified late antique society, in time was replaced by a kin-based redistributive society, which was characterised by the competition for communal dominance amongst the 'Big-men' in the late 7th and early 8th centuries. The domination of the 'Big-men' lasted until the mid- late 8th century, when Dalmatian elites found a way to centralize their power and establish hereditary power-structures inside regional polities, which were known as *županijas*. This social change was reflected in the increased quantity of grave goods with the appearance of martial elements (Carolingian swords) and equestrian equipment (stirrups) in the graves.

Archaeology showed the process of a slow and profound change which occurred in the region, especially in the matter of burial customs and the use of grave-goods. The intertwining of structures of power between the indigenous population and the arrivals and extreme political fragmentation which started to build from the bottom up, through kin-based units, regions and finally to political institutions.⁶⁵ We can assume that acculturation occurred through language-contacts. The gradual acceptance of Common Slavic as a second and later a first language, might have enabled the indigenous communities' easier participation in the power-structures of the Avar qaganate, and made communication easier inside this cultural 'continuum'. It seems probable to assume that the spread of Slavonic liturgy in the 11th century was the last stage in the acceptance of Slavic as the first language in Dalmatia.

The period of the 'Dark Ages' in Dalmatia, between the East Roman withdrawal in the 7th century and the Carolingian entrance and Byzantine recovery in the late 8th and early 9th centuries, were crucial times of transition. The existence of an 'Avar continuum' in Central Europe and the lack of complex political societies in the region impacted on the identity-construction of the indigenous population and the immigrants from the north who moved into post-Roman Dalmatia during the so-called 'Migrations of the Slavs'. The immigrants lacked numbers and political structures, and the indigenous

⁶⁵ As in Anglo-Saxon England, Yorke 2003: 395–401. The names of some early medieval villages in Dalmatia suggest the same conclusion that the kin-based units were the basis of social formation in post-Roman Dalmatia, Rapanić 1987: 62.

population lacked a binding ideological discourse, therefore the period was characterised by a strong process of acculturation and transformation, which resulted in the construction of a new cultural *habitus*, which would be regarded as 'Slav' by outside observers. The most important fact is that the influences from the north were visible only after the year 750, probably around 775, so that the appearance of the 'Old Croat' cemeteries cannot be ascribed to the influences from the migrating tides of 'Slavs' or arriving Croats. Therefore, we should see the development of the 'Old-Croat' cemeteries primarily in an indigenous context, and the influences from the Avar qaganate appeared only in the mid- to late 8th century.

Dalmatia showed a heterogeneous mosaic of identities which developed in this period. There was no unified picture of this process of 'becoming Slav', and it occurred in each region differently. The population of the Dalmatian coastal cities formed their own 'Roman' identity, which was based on the use of the ancient Roman past and centred on the cults of Christian saints. The population of the hinterland developed regional identities, which grew through simplified social structures based on kin-relationships. The process was also impacted by a number of settled immigrants and their relationships with the indigenous societies. In most situations we can recognise that they jointly formed new communities, or on some occasions, that the immigrants or indigenous populations assumed dominant positions.

This was a time of economic decline, of diseases and malnourishment, as skeletal remains of the inhabitants of Dalmatia from this period reveal. A process of identity-change is understandable in such circumstances, but it is even more understandable taking into account the disappearance of a cultural and ideological discourse which would establish a relationship with the past. An identity-shift, a growing up of regional identities which were neither 'Slav' or 'Indigenous', appears to be a good working hypothesis for the understanding of this difficult period. The population in the hinterland 'became Slavs', although that process of 'becoming Slavs' was difficult to see as assimilative and one-sided, but rather as a kind of cultural mimicry, Bhabhan hybridity, which imitated, but also changed. The process of acculturation culminated in the singularity of the term 'Slavs', which appeared in the perception of the extant early medieval sources, which in fact hid the descendants of the pre-Slavic population who restructured their identities in different forms, but also developed different identities. Some of those identities will be discussed in the next chapter.

8. THE NINTH CENTURY: *CHROATI EX MACHINA*

The first written mention of the Croats appeared in the mid-9th century. The charter of duke Trpimir (Trepimirus) is believed to be the oldest mention of the Croat polity name, mentioning one Trpimir, *dux Chroatorum*, who ruled over the *regnum Chroatorum*. It is preserved on a late manuscript from the 16th century. The elements of its authenticity are disputed for good reasons, as its language shows multiple authorship and obvious irregularities when compared with the diplomatic terminology of Trpimir's era, so we can partly see it as a later-day falsification. Whether the charter has a historical 'core' or not is difficult to say and the charter is not a decisive source for proving that Trpimir himself used the title *dux Chroatorum*, although that possibility is believable, and is argued below.¹ Thus, the first certain evidence of Croat identity remains the title *dux Cruatorum*, from the dedication of duke Branimir (Branimirus), discovered during the excavations of a single-nave in the pre-Romanesque basilica in Šopot near Benkovac in the Ravni Kotari, dated to the 880s.²

The appearance of Croat, but also many other 'Slav' political identities in early medieval Dalmatia in the written sources of the 9th century, came quite suddenly after two centuries of almost total silence. The appearance of these identities was seen in the scholarship for a long time as a final consolidation of the Slav and/or Croat settlement in post-Roman Dalmatia, and a sign of their political maturity.³ Nevertheless, lack of evidence for the Croat presence in the earlier period has led some scholars to explore other possibilities. The appearance of Croat identity in the 9th century has been explained by two recent approaches – the migrationist, which redated the Croat migration date from the 7th to the late 8th/early 9th centuries,⁴ or the lonely

¹ CD 1.3; Klaić 1960; 1966/67 esp. 250; 1990: 58; Perić 1984. Some experts saw its historical 'core' as authentic, Perić 1984: 166; Rapanić 1993; Budak 1994: 75–6. Margetić 1995b re-dated the charter from 852 into the 840s, using believable arguments.

² LEMCro 130; Pohl 1995: 222–3; Margetić 1995b.

³ Based in many ways on the narrative of Šišić 1925: 266 ff, which was rooted in the earlier assumptions of Rački that the Slavs were 'flooding' into the barely inhabited and desolate region in the 7th century.

⁴ Margetić 1977; 2001; Ančić 2001a; Milošević 2000a; Sokol2006, cf. also Pohl 1985; 1995; Budak 1990.

position of Mužić, who saw the establishment of the Croat polity as a rise of the indigenous elites.⁵

As discussed in chapters 5–7, the migration of the ‘Slavs’ or Croats and their mass-settlement in post-Roman Dalmatia in the 7th century is hardly believable in light of the existing sources, both written and material. While some population movement undoubtedly existed, the change of funerary practices and language shift in this period could more easily be explained by other factors, rather than to see it as a mass migration. However, sources from the period 750–850 indicated a profound social and political change which occurred in Dalmatia. The archaeological record of the Dalmatian cemeteries showed a development in the complex grave assemblages, which mostly disappeared after c. 850/855, with the simultaneous appearance of new cemeteries positioned around the newly built churches. The written sources also showed dramatic changes. The Frankish destruction of the Avar qaganate in Central Europe, and the return of Byzantine political ambitions in the Adriatic were key contributors to the political restructuring of the area. The Carolingian expansion also exported a new model of Christianity, new ways of life and new relations between religion and the elite in the region, carried by arriving Benedictine monks, as well as the Frankish political influence. This chapter will examine the wider political background of this transformation, the perceptions of the collective identity from this period, as well as the religious and social changes which occurred in the 9th century.

Political and social changes

The period after 750 brought significant political changes into the global perspective of the post-Roman world, which all significantly affected the political and social situation in early-medieval Dalmatia. A very important change was the recovery and return of the Byzantines into the Adriatic, after their Adriatic possessions were threatened by the loss of Ravenna and Istria. This period witnessed a crucial change in the former Roman West, when the Merovingian clan was replaced by the ambitious Carolingian dynasty. Imperialism and expansion of Carolingian power into Central Europe and the northern Adriatic corresponded with the establishment of more visible and undoubtedly

⁵ Mužić 2007; 2008.

more complex political institutions in post-Roman Dalmatia, which in turn created new circumstances for identity-construction in the region.

Global changes

The position of Byzantium in the Adriatic was destabilized by the fall of Ravenna and Istria to the Langobards in 751.⁶ The expansion of the Carolingians quickly brought them into conflict with the Byzantines for the control of the Dalmatian coastal cities and islands, as well as Venice. The conflict lasted from the 780s, but it greatly intensified in the period 806–812.⁷ The Byzantines at one time lost the Dalmatian cities, when the bishop Donatus and *dux* Paulus from Iader surrendered to Charlemagne in December 805, together with the Venetian deputies.⁸ However, after a change of fortune had been brought by the Byzantine fleet commanded by the capable patrician Nichetas, the Byzantines avoided disaster and achieved an honourable peace with Charlemagne in Aachen in 812. The treaty left the Dalmatian coastal cities to Byzantine rule, while Venice, Dalmatia and Liburnia were confirmed as being under the dominion of the Carolingians.⁹

In the background of these events the Byzantine administration was restructured and the archontate, which comprised the coastal Dalmatian cities, was established, with the early 9th century being the latest date.¹⁰ The wide-spread translation of the relics of the saints to the Adriatic cities, such as the relics of the late antique Syrmian martyr St. Anastasia, were moved to Iader from Constantinople, as the emperor's gift, which showed the Byzantines' seriousness in keeping the eastern Adriatic under control by any means, as well as to win the 'hearts

⁶ See the narrative and sources in Goldstein 1992: 120–4, cf. Brown 1995 esp. 320–41; Margetić 1992 for Istria.

⁷ ARF s.a. 806–7, s.a. 809–10, See also *Hist. Venet.* 2.25–8. Krahwinkel 1991: 179–83; Nicol 1988: 14–19; Štih 2005: 9–11; Živković 2007a: 227–9.

⁸ ARF s.a. 806; *Historia translationis s. Anastasiae* (Documenta 171.6).

⁹ ARF s.a. 811–2; *vita Karoli* 15; Poeta Saxo s.a. 812, s.a. 814.195–8; *Hist. Venet.* 2.29. The Frankish *Annals* used the term 'Dalmatia' for three distinct geographical units – the Byzantine-ruled cities, the region ruled by the *dux Dalmatiae et Liburniae* and the hinterland of the ancient Roman province dominated by the leaders of the Sorabi (Serbs?) mentioned in the ARF s.a. 822; Ančić 1997: 8–9.

¹⁰ Ferluga 1978: 127–36. Živković 2007a: 232–9 suggested that the archontate might have been established as early as the period after the fall of Ravenna in 751, and the *thema*, as early as early 820. See also Prigent 2008: 408–12, and above pp. 156–7.

and minds' of the Venetians and the Romani from Dalmatia.¹¹ It has been suggested that some organised settlement of the refugees from Asia Minor occurred in this period in the southeastern Adriatic (Ragusium and Decatera-Kotor) and, if true, it might also be seen as part of the same political offensive for maintaining a Byzantine presence in the Adriatic.¹² Nevertheless, these attempts did not result in lasting success for Constantinople. In the mid-late 820s, Byzantine political influence in Dalmatia crumbled as a consequence of Arab attacks on Sicily and southern Italy, but also because of the rise of the 'Slav' maritime power in the central Adriatic, known as the Arentani (Arentanoi, Narentani). Byzantine recovery and the foundation of the province (*thema*) Dalmatia under Basil I, c. 870 (probably 872–873 according to Ferluga) did not last long, which left the Dalmatian cities as *de facto* independent, and only under the nominal and distant rule of Constantinople.¹³

The rise of the Carolingians began in the 8th century; however, the most significant progress was achieved during the rule of Charlemagne (768–814, sole ruler from 771) and his successors, who succeeded in establishing their polity as the supreme political power. Whether directly or indirectly the Empire of the Franks controlled almost the whole post-Roman West.¹⁴ What is important to us here is that the Carolingian armies managed to subjugate and destroy the second Avar qaganate in the conflicts which lasted between 788 and 803. The Avars did not disappear from the historical stage for a few more decades, but their political power was destroyed in these wars forever. This triumph over the Avars in Pannonia and the conquest of Istria in the same period (sometime between 780 and 791, probably 788 or 789),¹⁵

¹¹ Osborne 1999 esp. 379–81, cf. Živković 2004: 65–7. See also Vedriš 2006 on Dalmatian translation legends as a literary genre.

¹² Stevović 2001/02, dating it to 809–810.

¹³ Ančić 1998, who drew upon the ideas of Cessi 1967, convincingly argued that the Byzantine *thema* was in reality an empty shell soon after its foundation, challenging the earlier views (Ferluga 1978: 165–89; also Goldstein 1996a; Živković 2007a: 236–55) that Byzantium directly controlled the Adriatic cities well into the 11th century. A few lead seals have survived, which confirm the existence of *archontes* with Byzantine titles, but with local origins in Dalmatia in the 9th century, Nesbit and Oiconomides 1991: 46–9.

¹⁴ The literature on this subject is enormous, see most recently in English: Smith 1995; Collins 1998; Innes 2000, esp. 180–263; Shutz 2004; Story 2005; McKitterick 2008, etc.

¹⁵ The conquest of Istria occurred before 791 when Ioannes, *dux de Histria*, was mentioned in the letter of Charlemagne to his wife, as his ally *Epist. Caroli* 20.25,

brought the Carolingian Empire strongly into the affairs of post-Roman Dalmatia and Pannonia. It was especially visible after Charlemagne's son Pippin in 791 attacked the Avars in Pannonia, fighting his way 'through Illyricum'.¹⁶ The rise of the Carolingian Empire was interconnected with the whole ideological, social and religious transformation which occurred at the same time. It was not only a 'renaissance', as the earlier historiography called it, it was a great political, social and spiritual transformation of the post-Roman West, through the emulation of the Roman past, but also through the establishment of entirely new cultural templates, which transformed communities inside the Empire, but also caused a profound change on its periphery.¹⁷

There are a few aspects of this transformation that were very important for early medieval Dalmatia. The Carolingian expansion and expansion of an ideologically based Christianity through missionary activity were strongly intertwined. The new spirit of Christianity gave it a proper conduct, strict discipline and organisational infrastructure, and defined its orthodoxy. Its spread and reinforcement was entrusted to the missionaries.¹⁸ The other aspect of the change was the redefinition of political and social relations. The Carolingians did not rule alone, it was a polycentric system bound by a negotiation between the centre and periphery – between royal ambition and the interests of the regional elites, which did not necessarily represent opposing poles of power. The Carolingian system operated through patronage and family networks, it institutionalised the dominance of local elites over their communities in terms of imperial offices, and offered them the opportunity to entrench their power and even extend it.¹⁹

Migration in the ninth century?

The hypothesis that the Croats migrated to Dalmatia in the 9th century from Eastern/Northeastern Europe deserves to be analysed more

Šišić 1925: 349; Ferluga 1987b: 165; Krahwinkler 1991: 200, 211–5; Goldstein 1992: 151; Margetić 1992; 1994c; Štih 2005: 3–9.

¹⁶ Illyricum was mentioned only in *Ann. Lauresh.* s.a. 791, but not in ARF s.a. 791. For the Avar wars see Pohl 1988: 315–23; Bowlus 1995b: 46–59. It is possible that Frankish power, directly or indirectly, stretched all the way to Sirmium, *Versus Paulini* 2 and 6, see also Krahwinkler 1991: 156–7. On wider policy-concerns, see Bowlus 2002.

¹⁷ McKitterick 1994; 2008: 292–380; Shutz 2004, etc.

¹⁸ Reynolds 1995; de Jong 1995; Fletcher 1998: 193–284; Innes 2000: 13–50; Shutz 2004: 27–42.

¹⁹ Innes 2000: 251–63; Airlie 1995, see also Urbańczyk 2005 in the context of East-Central Europe.

closely here. This view was developed in the late 1970s by Lujo Margetić and accepted by Nada Klaić, Mladen Ančić and Vladimir Sokol in the 1980s and 2000s, with different approaches. Margetić's key point that there were no Croats in post-Roman Illyricum until the 9th century was revolutionary for the time it was written and caused an immediate reaction from the scholarly establishment.²⁰ In a different line of thought, but with emphasis on the same period, approached this problem in the 1980s Pohl, who argued that Croats was originally a social term inside the Avar qaganate (probably an honourable title), not an ethnonym. According to him, with the destruction of the qaganate, the name Croat lost its original significance and function and become a term for denominating local groups of warriors, becoming ultimately an ethnonym.²¹

Margetić's line of thought, which encountered numerous scholarly criticisms, continued with Ančić in more recent times. In a witty way, he improved some of the inadequacies and methodological inconsistencies of Margetić. The main idea of Ančić was that the Croats came in the 9th century as one of the groups in the migrations which were initiated by the disappearance of the Avar qaganate, and in accordance with the military expansion of the Carolingians as their allies. He recognised the similarities between the names of some peoples from Northern Europe who were named in the Frankish sources and by the so-called Bavarian Geographer, and the names of some regions which belonged to or neighboured the Croat polity, such as the Obodrites on the Baltic sea and in Pannonia, Hliuno near Lüneburg and Hlivno, modern Livno (*županija Hlebianina*) in Herzegovina, Buzani in Central Europe and later *županija Bužani* in Lika, *pagus Daleminzi* on the mid-Elba and its inhabitants the Dlamozani (who called themselves Glomaci and were called by the *Annales Fuldenses Dalmatii*), whose group-name Dlamozani reminds on later identity of the Glamočani in the Dalmatian hinterland. Ančić further ascribed the appearance of Carolingian military equipment in the 9th century Dalmatian cemeteries chiefly to the arrival of the Croats, as a small elite group, who settling there as one of the groups who arrived after the defeat of the Avars and under Carolingian auspices.²²

²⁰ The first criticism of Margetić was published in the same publication where his article appeared, Suić 1977.

²¹ Pohl 1985; 1988: 16, 261–7; 1995: 222–3.

²² Ančić 2001a, in Italian, Ančić 2001c.

This important theoretical development is not without its problems, and the thesis of the late arrival of the Croats has been criticised by the mainstream scholarship. The most important problem remains a lack of sources, as no Carolingian source noticed these migrations. Ančič built his argument on the similarities of toponyms and ethnonyms in Northeastern and Central Europe with Dalmatia, which is not the most secure way of explaining the processes of migration in early medieval times. The migration of the Croats from the north in this period was also implied by some recent anthropological studies. Šlaus and his collaborators showed craniometrical (skull-measuring) similarities between three Polish and eight Dalmatian cemeteries associated with the early Croats, in particular Nin, which was roughly contemporary. They also showed differences between Dalmatian and samples from northern Croatia. The conclusion that these similarities might prove that Croat migration from Poland was probably too farfetched; firstly, this data was derived from a small sample, and second, that physical characteristics cannot alone determine ethnicity and group identity, which is a social construct. It is also worthwhile pointing out that this analysis does not take into account the indigenous population of Dalmatia from antiquity, and that the analysis showed differences in Polish and Dalmatian samples from other 'Slav' samples from Austria, Slovenia and Bohemia.²³

Most archaeologists are critical of the idea of a 9th century migration. As shown in chapter 6, the prevailing opinion was that it is impossible to detect traces of the arrival of any foreign groups into Dalmatia in the 9th century, and that the 'Old-Croat' archaeological culture showed an undisputable continuity between the 7th and 9th centuries. The appearance of Carolingian military equipment in Dalmatia is also not decisive evidence for a Croat migration sponsored by the Carolingians, as the equipment appeared in regions outside of the Carolingian polity, and the use of foreign military technology did not necessarily imply the arrival of a foreign group.²⁴ There are only a few archaeologists who have embraced the idea of an additional Croat settlement, such as Milošević or Rapanić; the most consistent archaeological argument was given by Sokol, who dated the Croat arrival to c. 795/800. The general problem with the existing archaeological arguments that favoured a late migration is that they were all deeply rooted

²³ Šlaus et al. 2002: 94–104; Šlaus 1998; 2004: 434–4.

²⁴ Budak and Raukar 2006: 49–50.

in the 'culture-history' approach; therefore the appearance of contemporary Carolingian artefacts and the increasing complexity of burial assemblages were regarded as an arrival of a new (ethnic) group. The view of Sokol also has significant problems, as he opposed the view that a smaller, elite group settled in this period, and by that he *de facto* assumed a mass migration of the Croats, which is hard to believe.²⁵ The observation of Sokol that burial assemblages in cemeteries throughout Dalmatia and southern Pannonia shared common elements in the late 8th and early 9th centuries, proved the existence of a shared cultural *habitus*, but this does not help to prove a migration of the outside group.

Scholarship should not fully eliminate the possibility of population movements following the fall of the Avar qaganate. It is possible to agree with the view that some small groups indeed might have arrived in this period in Dalmatia, in the same way the groups of the Sclavenes could settle in the 7th century. However, whether the group which designated themselves as Croats migrated into Dalmatia in this period cannot be said with any certainty due to the current state of the evidence. Although this possibility should remain open, the present author is not fully convinced. It is important to notice that the leaders of the earliest Carolingian Dalmatia and staunch Carolingian allies, as discussed later in this chapter, were the Guduscani from the modern Lika region, not the Croats. The appearance of the Croat identity corresponded and was inextricably linked with the transfer of political power from Lika, south into the coastal regions of the Ravni Kotari in the hinterland of Zadar, between the rivers Zrmanja and Krka.

The political structures in Carolingian Dalmatia

Even at first sight it is apparent that global social and political transformations in the late 8th and early 9th centuries strongly affected Dalmatia. Not only in the relative abundance of sources, but also in the appearance of social structures, which are much easier to detect than those from the earlier period. It seems that the interaction with the Frankish West, more than the revived Byzantine presence, caused the process of change and transformation in Dalmatia, making social structures more hierarchical and structured than in the earlier period.

²⁵ Milošević 2000a was an important stepping stone for this view. See also Milošević 2001; Rapanić 2001; Sokol 2006, esp. 158–62.

The initial establishment of Frankish power over this region is unfortunately not well documented in the sources, but it might be assumed to be in the background of the previously mentioned Avar wars c. 788–803 and the Frankish-Byzantine conflicts in the north Adriatic which escalated in the period between 806 and 812. The earliest direct evidence of early Carolingian involvement was probably the news about the death of Erich, the duke of Friuli, in a battle against the citizens of the *castrum* Tarsatica (modern Trsat, or even Rijeka) in Liburnia.²⁶ The peace of Aachen in 812 confirmed Dalmatia, except for the Byzantine cities and islands, as under Frankish domain, and in the 810s Dalmatia appeared to be under the general jurisdiction of the march of Friuli and its dukes in the later period, but the real extent of that jurisdiction is not known – whether it was only a recognition of the nominal Frankish overlordship, or the area was formally part of the march.²⁷ The power of Cadalus (Cadolah), the margrave of Friuli, over Dalmatia, was clearly visible in 817, when the envoys from Constantinople came to the court of the emperor Louis the Pious to settle a dispute over boundaries in Dalmatia.²⁸ His successor Baldrich (Balderich) was actively involved in the uprising of Ljudevit (Liudewitus), the duke of Pannonia inferior (below, pp. 186–7), and after his death and defeat by the Bulgars in 828, when the Friulian march was rearranged and divided amongst four *comes*, the earlier duchy of Dalmatia and Liburnia may have constituted one of these counties. The question remains unsolved in the historiography, as no direct evidence exists, and Dalmatia was not mentioned in this division of the march.²⁹

The internal situation in Dalmatia appears to be very complex in this period. In connection with the uprising of the Ljudevit, the Frankish *Annals* mentioned their ally Borna in different places, with

²⁶ ARF s.a. 799; *Vita Karoli* 13, cf. also Annalista Saxo s.a. 799, *Vesurs Paulini* and Poeta Saxo, s.a. 799. 101–5; Ross 1945; Krahwinkler 1991: 152–8. The question of who killed Erich remains open, but scholarship mostly suspects the Byzantines: Pohl 1988: 321; Krahwinkler 1991: 153; Goldstein 1992: 152; Živković 2007a: 227; some suspect the Croats: Šišić 1925: 306–7; Ross 1945: 225–6; Margetić 1994d; Budak 1994: 15, or the Avars: Labus 2000.

²⁷ Informal relations, Frankish clients: Krahwinkler 1991: 190, the more formal jurisdiction of the margraves of Friuli: McKitterick 1983: 129; Budak 1997: 16. See recently Wolfram 2002, who viewed the establishment of the marches after 799 as a genuine attempt to consolidate the Empire and secure, rather than expand, its frontiers, using local princes under the command of the Frankish margraves.

²⁸ ARF, s.a. 817, *Vita Hludowici* 27. Krahwinkler 1991: 182–3.

²⁹ ARF s.a. 828; *Vita Hludowici* 42; Budak 1997: 16. This topic has been debated for a while; see the different opinions in Krahwinkler 1991: 194–7.

the titles *dux Dalmaciae*, *dux Dalmatiae et Liburniae*, but also as a *dux Guduscanorum*.³⁰ There were numerous debates about the titles and position of Borna. Three basic models were discussed in the scholarship, each with considerable variations in individual scholarly interpretations. The first model postulated that Borna was the leader of the Guduscani, who spread his influence over early medieval Dalmatia, which was the future Croat polity. The second model saw him as a leader of the Croats, in Frankish terminology *dux Dalmaciae*, who also ruled, or extended his rule, over the Guduscani in the north, thus becoming *dux Dalmatiae et Liburniae*. Finally, the third model saw *dux Guduscanorum* as Borna's gentile title and *dux Dalmaciae*, short for *dux Sclavorum Dalmatinorum atque Liburnorum*, as a title which showed his leadership over the loose Croat 'tribal' alliance.³¹

A crucial stumbling block for scholarly disagreement was caused by the ambiguous Latin in ARF s.a. 818:

Erant ibi et aliarum nationum legati Abodritum videlicet ac Bornae ducis Guduscanorum et Timocianorum qui nuper a Bulgarorum societate desciverant...

It is usually translated as:

"The envoys of other peoples were also there, that is, of the Obodrites, of Borna, duke of the Guduscani, and of the Timociani, who had recently revolted against the Bulgars ..." (transl. Scholz 1970: 104)

But there is also an alternative translation:

*"And there came legates from all other nations, that is of the Obodrites, the duke Borna, the Guduscani and Timociani, who had recently revolted from the rule of the Bulgars ..."*³²

³⁰ ARF s.a. 818–9, 821; *Vita Hludowici* 32. Liburnia (or *patria Liburnia Tarsaticensis; Cosmographia* 4.22) in Late Antiquity this related to parts of ancient Liburnia from Aenona to Tarsatica, including the lands of the pre-Roman Iapodes in modern Lika, rather than to the lands of pre-Roman Liburni, Suić 1970. The Guduscani were located in the later župa Gacka – Gъдъска (Γουτζησκά DAL, 30.95) in Lika, Katičić 1985: 305–6.

³¹ First model: Drinov 1876: 37, recently Mužić 2007: 157–63; second model: Šišić 1925: 310 n. 25; recently Ančić 1997; third model: Katičić 1990a, based upon Rački's ideas of the Croats as a 'tribal confederation', Rački [1879–93] 2008: 73–4, 97 ff. See the recent discussion of the historiography of this problem with a comprehensive bibliography in Alimov 2006.

³² Ančić 1997: 8, following Šišić 1913/14: 31. It is obvious that Carolingian manuscripts had no punctuation, so the presence or lack of a comma is entirely based on the interpretation of the editor and carries major significance in the translation of these lines. Ančić was right when he noticed that the comma in the text behind Borna's

To add to the confusion, describing the same occasion, *Vita Hludowici* 31 named only the Obodrites, Guduscani and Timociani.³³ Although the passage can be read both ways, a second reading of the passage, argued by Šišić and recently Ančić, reading appears less believable from the first. It would be unusual for the *Annals* to give only Borna's name without his full title. In addition, *Vita Hludowici* mentioned only the Abodrites, Guduscani and Timociani – thus Borna was obviously referred to under the label of the Guduscani. The sources were therefore very clear on this matter: Borna was the leader of the Guduscani from modern-day Lika. If Borna was the leader of the Croats, it is very likely that the sources would report that fact. In this period the Frankish *Annals* were very interested in early medieval Dalmatia and reported even matters they would not usually report – such as indigenous political identities. There was no conflict for Borna to carry different titles, as the title of *dux Dalmatiae (et Liburniae)* given to him by the Franks described the extent of his power in the Frankish political geography which was taken from Late Antiquity, while the title *dux Guduscanorum* showed his regional powerbase. It did seem more reasonable to see him as leader of the Guduscani entrusted by the Franks with the title resembling a late antique Roman nomenclature – *dux Dalmatiae (et Liburniae)*,³⁴ and directly subordinated to the Friulian margrave.

There is not much known about the Guduscani. They may have been an indigenous group from Lika, or one of the migrating groups from the north, whose migrations across post-Avar Pannonia under the Carolingian's blessing were postulated by Ančić. Lika lacked the density of the 'Old-Croat' cemeteries, as seen in the Ravni Kotari, with very occasional finds of Carolingian weapons and late Avar equestrian equipment.³⁵ Whether this blurry material record of post-Roman and early mediaeval Lika was due to insufficient excavations, sparse

name was added in the later edition of ARF. There is no comma in the ARF edition from 1826, (MGH: SS 1). It was introduced in 1877 by Rački in *Documenta* 171.21 (cf. p. 321 n. 7 of *Documenta*) and it appeared later in the ARF edition from 1895.

³³ Bowlus 1995: 61 saw Borna as a leader of the Guduscani and Timociani. The location of the Timociani on the river Timok in eastern Serbia is a *communis opinio*, but it is not fully convincing due to geographical distance.

³⁴ See Katičić 1985: 299–300 on the late antique *patriae* in the region, as the basis of an administrative division in Carolingian times.

³⁵ The number of 'Old-Croat' cemeteries in Lika is negligible, as compared with coastal areas, Ercegović 1960. A few Carolingian swords were discovered, probably from destroyed graves, I. Šarić 1972/73. One 9th century spur was found by a military officer-antiquarian in the 19th century, Sokol 2008: 183–5. A few metal ornaments for equestrian equipment in the late Avar fashion were also found, Simoni 1986: 218–9,

habitation or archaeologically invisible burial customs which were different from the 'Old-Croat' culture remains unclear. However, what appears obvious from the Carolingian sources is that the Guduscani were a separate political identity from the Croats in the early 9th century.³⁶ The final establishment of the Guduscan political domination in coastal Dalmatia might be seen in the context of a Byzantine-Carolingian conflict in the northern Adriatic, which ended in the peace of Aachen in 812. The Guduscani most certainly acted on the side of the Carolingians in the Avar and Byzantine wars, and their leaders were rewarded with dominion over a newly formed *ducatus* in coastal Dalmatia, apart from the Byzantine cities, and the interior of the province ruled by the Sorabi. It is very likely that the administration of this Dalmatian *ducatus* was modelled upon the Carolingian examples and from regional power-structures (*županijas*), which represented the backbone of administration in the Croat polity in the mid- later 9th century.³⁷

The conflict with Ljudevit, the *dux Pannoniae inferioris*, shifted for a while the attention of the Carolingian annalists to the region and we can see more clearly a political picture which emerged after the peace of Aachen and the destruction of the Avar qaganate. The administration of the newly acquired territories after the fall of the qaganate was entrusted to the local rulers. According to the sources, lower Pannonia between the rivers Drava and Sava was the domain of the *dux Pannoniae Inferioris* Ljudevit, who unsuccessfully challenged the overlordship of the Carolingians in 819–822. Although earlier scholarship and popular perception saw Ljudevit and his people as Croats, there is no evidence that they had a sense of Croat identity.³⁸ As a consequence of the uprising, as Ančić and Budak recently argued, the Dalmatian dukes, as Frankish allies, were in charge of expanding into southern Pannonia, up to the river Drava, after the breakdown of Ljudevit's

223–4. The absence of artefacts which might be dated before the last phases of the second Avar qaganate in Lika is noticeable, Sokol 2008: 185–7.

³⁶ Ančić 1997, cf. Alimov 2006 showed that it was untenable that the Croats were a 'tribal confederation', as Rački argued, Rački [1879–93] 2008: 97–102.

³⁷ Ančić 2005a: 216–8 pointed out the similarities between the organisation of the Croat court, as evidenced by the charter of duke Muncimir from 892 (CD 1.20) and the Carolingian court.

³⁸ On the uprising of Ljudevit, see Krahwinkler 1991: 186–92; Bowlus 1995b: 60–70; Goldstein 1995: 166–71. Budak 2000: 396 and Ančić 2001a: 17–20 did not see Ljudevit and his people as the Croats. Contra Goldstein 1995: 142, 166–7.

polity.³⁹ Whether the Dalmatian-Liburnian *ducatus* encompassed all of *Pannoniae Inferioris* is not clear from the evidence,⁴⁰ but it is very probable that some regions in northwest Dalmatia, north of the *županijas* of Pleba and Pesenta around the river Vrbas, were joined to the Dalmatian *ducatus* after 822.

Borna's family ruled a few more years over the Dalmatian *ducatus*, the sources mentioned his nephew Vladislav (Ladasclavus, Ladascleus), whose appointment was approved by the emperor and 'the people' after Borna died in 821.⁴¹ Ljudemisl (Liudemisl), Borna's uncle, was also mentioned as a person of influence in Dalmatia. He ordered the killing of Ljudevit after he became a fugitive and after he approached Ljudemisl to help him enter the *ducatus* in 823, after a period of hiding amongst the Sorabi.⁴² The rule of Borna and Vladislav was embedded inside the Carolingian power-structures and subordinated to the Friulian margrave; therefore, the defeat of Baldrich by the Bulgars in 827 might have been a significant date for damaging the supremacy of the Guduscani in Dalmatia, who were shown by the sources to be staunch allies of the Carolingians.

Croatian scholarship sometimes placed duke Višeslav (Visseslaus) as the ruler after Vladislav, but lack of evidence makes his reign obscure and open to speculation.⁴³ The only evidence witnessing the rule of dux Višeslav is the inscription from the baptismal font which bore his name. Unfortunately this evidence is very controversial to be accepted as a relevant source, although the opinion of scholars remains divided and the problem is still open.⁴⁴ Soon, a new ruler, dux Mislav (Mojslav,

³⁹ Budak 2000: 398–401; Ančić 2001a: 19, 27–8.

⁴⁰ OE Orosius, 1.1 (18/15) mentioned the Dalmatian duchy touching the Bulgar frontier and DAI, 30.60–4; 32.126–8, reported that the Croats were fighting Bulgars during the rule of Boris (Michael) I (852–889). See debate between Katičić 2003 and Matijević-Sokol and Sokol 2005: 7–26, who made a valiant effort to determine the frontiers of the 9th century Croat dukedom based on old-fashioned positivist and literary reading of OE Orosius' vague geographical depiction.

⁴¹ ARF s.a. 821; *Vita Hludowici* 34. Too much emphasis should not be placed on the appointment of Vladislav by the people (mentioned only by ARF) as placed in Katičić 1990a: 73 and Ančić 1997: 10. The mention of the people in the Carolingian charters meant that it was an open, not a secretive act of appointment, which was the imitation of earlier late Roman legal forms, see Innes 2000: 94–5.

⁴² ARF s.a. 823.

⁴³ S. Gunjača 1973: 137–41; Posavec 1996a. Mostly, Višeslav is dated before Borna, after Šišić 1925: 308–9

⁴⁴ For the inscription from the font, see Delonga 1996: 205–7. Doubts about its authenticity and origins: Suić and Perinić 1962; Klaić 1971: 197–8; Jakšić 2002.

Muslaus) was mentioned by the sources. The charter of Trpimir mentioned Mislav as the predecessor of Trpimir, while John the Deacon knew of a peace treaty between the *princeps* Mislav and the Venetians in an unidentified place of St. Martin, which was the *curtis*⁴⁵ of Mislav. The cult of St. Martin was quite popular in medieval Dalmatia, with numerous locations named after the saint. Thus far, all attempts to locate this possession of Mislav have failed.⁴⁶ Most Croatian scholars believe that the powerbase of Mislav and Trpimir was the area behind ancient Salona, which stretched from Bijaći, above Tragurium, to Klis in the pass above Salona. This belief was based on evidence from the charter of Trpimir, which gave possessions to the Spalatin church in Bijaći, and tithe from the duke's possessions in Klis, confirming the donation of Trpimir's predecessor Mislav. The charter also mentioned the *curtis* of the duke located in Klis (*ex curte nostra que Clisa dicitur*), which Croatian historiography and archaeology recognised as a reference to the court of Trpimir.⁴⁷

A recent micro-regional study of Ančić showed that the belief that Bijaći and Klis were central strongholds of Mislav and Trpimir is unfounded, chiefly based on judgements from 18th century antiquarians (Riceputi and Farlati), who assumed that the buildings in Bijaći, near the church of St. Martha, must be the royal palace of the Croat dukes. It is much more likely that this complex was of economic significance, rather than the rulers' court. Thus the space between Bijaći and Klis should be seen as only one of the royal estates with dependent tenants, ruled by the under-*župan* from Klis, not the residence of the Croat dukes.⁴⁸ The area of Ravni Kotari, a spatial triangle between Nin,

Recently its authenticity was defended by Belošević 1997: 132–6; and in particular Matijević-Sokol 2007a, with an encompassing bibliography.

⁴⁵ The word *curtis* means court, but in a contemporary early medieval context *curtis* was more likely to mean manor, as a large estate with dependent tenants, and an administrative centre, rather than a court, see Goetz 1995: 473–6; Verhulst 2002: 34–7; Francovich and Hodges 2003: 75–105, and in medieval Croatia, Skok 1928.

⁴⁶ CD 1.3; *Hist. Venet.* 2.49; Vedriš 2009: 239–40. The cult of St. Martin in medieval Croatia, Zaradija Kiš 2004, and more clearly in Vedriš 2009, who convincingly suggested that the immense popularity of the cult was due to both its survival in Dalmatia from Late Antiquity, and its popularity amongst Frankish missionaries.

⁴⁷ Šišić 1925: 326, 331, assuming that Mislav moved his court to Klis, and Karaman 1930: 66–78, who saw the Bijaći manorial complex as a ducal complex from an archaeological perspective.

⁴⁸ Ančić 2004.

Knin and Skradin appears to be the most likely candidate for the heartland of the first known Croat rulers Mislav and Trpimir. This area has the largest concentration of churches, cemeteries and buildings from the 9th century. The region was also known as the *Hrvati* ('Croats') and *v Hrvatih* ('amongst the Croats') in the later medieval times, as well as being the seat of the *episcopus Chroatorum*.⁴⁹

The family of Bornja was replaced by Mislav and Trpimir, the leaders of the Croats from the Ravni Kotari/Knin region. Thus the Croats replaced Gudusciani as the leaders of the Dalmatian *ducatus*, while the Gudusciani kept a certain level of independence as evidenced by the DAI, which stated that three *županijas* of the Croatian kingdom in Lika (Gacka, Krbava, Lika) were ruled by an official called the *ban* in the 10th century.⁵⁰ This transition could have been supported by the Franks, so that Dalmatia and Liburnia, now the domain of the Croats, kept the Carolingian rulers as nominal masters.⁵¹ Mislav and his successor Trpimir (Trepimirus) started to slowly dissolve links with the Carolingians, which were carefully maintained by the rulers of the Gudusciani.⁵² They were both first rulers who were called leaders of the Croats, Trpimir in his charter and Mislav by the later Venetian source. Trpimir built up a strong polity, which waged war with the Byzantine cities and the Bulgars and issued charters. From him, the unbroken

⁴⁹ Ančić 2008a: 47–50, who saw it as the region where the Croats settled in the 9th century. Archaeology has shown that Knin, not the hinterland of Salona between Klis and Bijaći, had the strongest building program in the times of Trpimir, Jarak 1999. For the problems regarding whether the diocese of Nin was founded in the 9th century or had continuously existed in post-Roman times, see Strika 2007: 90–8.

⁵⁰ DAI, 30.93–94, see Alimov 2006. The original Croat homeland would therefore later be divided into the *županijas* Nina, Sidraga, Nona, Breberi and Tnina (see table 1 and map 5). The rest of the *županijas* showed territorial units, probably initially different political units subsequently incorporated into the Croatian kingdom: one comprising *županijas* Pleba and Pesenta in modern western Bosnia and Krajina, other Parathalassia and Cetina in central Dalmatian coast, and third *županijas* Chlebiana and Emota in present Herzegovina.

⁵¹ Ančić 2001a: 10–11. Some authors, such as Margetić 1988: 231–2, dated the transition of the seat of power from Lika to Dalmatia in the period between 827 and 839.

⁵² The idea of a stronger political influence by the Carolingians in the mid- and later 9th century in Dalmatia was recently argued by Borri 2008, but it is difficult to maintain, taking into account the very loose political links that the Carolingian rulers maintained with their subjects. The Croat dukes probably acknowledged Frankish kings as their *de iure* sovereigns, as we can see in Trpimir's charter, but *de facto* they enjoyed significant independence and freedom of action, similar to the relationship of Dalmatian cities and Constantinople.



Map 5: Županijas of the Croat kingdom, and neighbouring polities, as mentioned in DAI.

PARATHALASSIA	– županija
Arentanoi	– neighboring polities
SPALATUM	– Byzantine cities
	– Croat heartland (Nin-Knin-Skradin)
	– Byzantine islands

succession of the Croat dukes is usually established, although the question of Trpimir's succession is not fully solved – see Appendix 1. Trpimir's successor was the usurper Domagoj (Domagoi), who died in 878, and whose sons were replaced by the Byzantine favourite Zdeslav (Sedesclaus), the son of Trpimir. Zdeslav was soon killed by 'some Slav' Branimir (Branimerus),⁵³ who ruled in 879–892 and was referred to as *dux Cruatorum* in the inscription from Šopot. His successors were again from the house of Trpimir: Muncimir (Muncimirus) and probably Tomislav (Tamisclaus) who is believed to have made the Croat polity into a kingdom in c. 925 (see the list of the Dalmatian rulers in the Appendix 1).⁵⁴

⁵³ *Hist. Venet.* 3.25.

⁵⁴ Evidence for Tomislav as the first Croat king rests on the insufficiently reliable HSM, so it cannot be accepted at full value.

Table 1: The list of *županijas* of the Croat kingdom from DAI, 30.90–94⁵⁵

Name from the DAI	Modern Location and central city	Modern Region
ή Κρίβασαν <i>Kribasa</i> (Krbava)	Around the village of Udbina	Lika (ruled by the ban)
ή Γουτζησκά <i>Goutziska</i> (Gacka)	Gacka	Lika (ruled by the ban)
ή Λίτζαν <i>Litza</i> (Lika)	Lika	Lika (ruled by the ban)
ή Νίνα <i>Nina</i> (Nin)	Northwest Ravni Kotari (Nin)	Ravni Kotari
ή Σίδραγα <i>Sidraga</i> (Sidraga)	Southern Ravni Kotari (Biograd)	Ravni Kotari
ή Βρεβέρη <i>Breberi</i> (Bribir)	Eastern Ravni Kotari (Bribir)	Ravni Kotari
ή Τνήνα <i>Tnina</i> (Knin)	Upper flow of Krka (Knin)	
ή Τζένζενα <i>Tzenzina</i> (Cetina)	The valley of Cetina river	
ή Χλεβιανὰ <i>Chlebiana</i> (Hlivno)	The <i>polje</i> of Livno (Livno)	South-western Herzegovina
τὰ Ἥμοτα <i>Emota</i> (Imota)	Imotski? ⁵⁶	South-western Herzegovina
ή Παραθαλασσία <i>Parathalassia</i> (Maritime <i>županija</i>)	South of river Krka, the hinterland of Split (Klis/Bijaći)	Central Dalmatia
ή Πλέβα <i>Pleba</i> (Pliva)	The river Pliva, between Šipovo and Jajce (Plivski Grad or Soko Grad)	Western Bosnia
ή Πεσέντα <i>Pesenta</i> (Pset)	Mountain Grmeč near Petrovac	Krajina
ή Νόνα <i>Nona</i> (Nadin)	Central Ravni Kotari	Ravni Kotari

⁵⁵ This list does not list all *županijas*, as Constantine was more interested in the coastal *županijas*, and cared less for those located more inland, Smiljanić 1990: 383–4; 1995: 188–9; Goldstein 1996b; Ančić 1998: 207. See Goldstein 1996b for a more precise location of the *županijas* from the DAI.

⁵⁶ Usually placed in Imotski – the hinterland of the Biokovo Mountain. However, this location does not agree with the DAI 31.116–7 where Tzenzina and Chlebiana

Slavness and Croatness: Outsider and insider views on identities

The abundance of written and epigraphic sources from Carolingian Dalmatia has enabled a more thorough analysis of the identities represented in the contemporary sources. In more recent times, Fine concluded that the Croat identity was weakened from migration times, and there was no attraction in the Croat identity and that most of the minority Croats that settled were slowly assimilated into a general 'Slav' identity. A more recent and more thorough analysis of Budak agreed in essence with Fine that the majority of the population did share a 'Slav' identity. Budak showed that Croat identity existed as one of the identity narratives in Carolingian Dalmatia, but he also showed awareness of the discrepancy between the perception of identities from outside observers in the written sources and the self-perception of the elite shown in the epigraphy, which Fine did not take into account.⁵⁷

Written sources and identities: Dalmatini, Sclavi and Croati

The most significant and most numerous references to identities in early Carolingian Dalmatia reveal major identity perceptions: Dalmatians, Slavs, Croats, and Romani from Dalmatian cities. The abundance of written sources for the identities of the 9th century post-Roman Illyricum, as welcome as they are after the drought of written sources in the 7th and 8th centuries, also carry numerous problems with their interpretation. The Latin language sources were mostly derived from the Carolingian cultural circle, from the annalistic tradition, such as the *Royal Frankish Annals*, but also biographical works,

were shown as the most eastern *županijas* of the Croat kingdom. In antiquity a place named Aemate and the community of Aematini (CIL 3.9864; Bojanovski 1988: 295–6) was mentioned in the area of Pliva, in the space between Pleba, Pesenta, Chlebiana, Cetina and Tnina, today's Šipovo, a border between the Republic of Srpska and the north-western part of Hercegbosnian province in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. If right, it would probably necessitate placement of the *županija* Pleba more to the north, in the valley of Vrbas.

⁵⁷ Budak 2008 (sketched in Budak 1999: 124–5); Fine 2006: 27–66, esp. 63–6. Budak 2008: 240–1 saw identities in Dalmatia in a pyramidal structure: 1. Dalmatians, 2. Romans & Slavs, 3. Local urban identities and Slav ethnicities (Croats, Serbs, Docleans), 4. Smaller Slav units. He fell into a trap, trying to introduce a taxonomic division into socially constructed phenomena, such as group identities. Less successful was Fine 2006: 25–6, 63–6, who attempted to impose a taxonomic division between 'tribes' and 'ethnic groups' in Dalmatia.

such as the *Life of Charlemagne* by Alcuin, *Life of Louis the Pious* by Thegan and by Astronomus.⁵⁸ Dalmatia was mentioned by the travelling Benedictine monks, such as Godescalc of Orbais, or Amalarius of Metz, who travelled through the region. Also, there are letters from Pope John VIII to the dukes Domagoj, Zdeslav and Branimir, and the Venetian tradition preserved in the *Historia Veneticorum* by John the Deacon, written c. 1000. The only important Greek-language source was the DAI, which was more accurate for the 10th century. Self-perception of the Dalmatian elite is preserved only in the royal charters of Trpimir and Muncimir, and there is also an interesting example of the hermit in Bohemia who allegedly called himself John the Croat.

The Carolingian sources were mostly interested in the uprising of Ljudevit and did not care much for representing an accurate ethnic or identity- picture of Dalmatia and its population. They preferred to use the geographical terminology from Late Antiquity, such as the *patria* Dalmatia or Liburnia, and a generalizing pseudo ethnic term, 'Slavs'. They imagined the population of early medieval Dalmatia as the 'Dalmatians', 'Romans' and the 'Slavs', and avoided mentioning more specific identities, even as late as the 11th century. Only in a few instances do the Carolingian sources show an awareness of the groups in Dalmatia, such as the Guduscani or the Sorabi from the Dalmatian hinterland,⁵⁹ unlike the much more up to date information which was provided about the peoples outside of the Carolingian commonwealth who inhabited modern Central and Northern Europe. The perception of Dalmatians was very fluent in the Carolingian sources. The ARF saw the delegation of the Romani from Iader at the Carolingian court from 806 as, "... *the legates of the Dalmatians.*" In 817 the Byzantines complained about the boundary arrangements after the peace of 812 with the Carolingians, and the legates were sent to fix, "... *the boundaries between the Dalmatians, Romans and Slavs*", or "... *the boundaries*

⁵⁸ See McKitterick 2008: 7–56 with bibliography on these sources.

⁵⁹ The dukes of the Sorabi: ARF s.a. 822. These Sorabi are sometimes in the scholarship equal to the Serbs. As noticed recently, the stronger emphasis on the presence of the Serbs in central Dalmatia in this period corresponds with the contemporary building up of a popular discourse on the Republic of Srpska (Република Српска, established in 1992, and from 1995 a part of Bosnia and Herzegovina with significant autonomy under the Dayton peace agreement) in the public perception, Ančić 2005/06: 70–5.

between the Dalmatians: Romans and Slavs" (the Latin could be read both ways), as Astronomus observed.⁶⁰

It is curious that the Carolingian sources never mentioned the Croats by name, even though we are certain that they had personal knowledge of the region. The theologian Godescalc of Orbais, who was at the court of Trpimir in the late 840s, still presented him to his audience in a cultural 'package' that they would understand, as a '*rex Sclavorum*', although there was no evidence that Trpimir ever presented himself as a king, or even as a Slav. Godescalc also mentioned the 'Dalmatians' (*Dalmatini homines*), who were noted besides the 'Latins' (Romani) from the Dalmatian cities for their peculiar Latin terminology.⁶¹ Amalarius of Metz, another Frankish theologian, also travelled across the Adriatic on his way to Constantinople, but he left us fewer details about the peoples he encountered on his trip. He spent some time in Iader and reported in his letter to Hilduin, the abbot of St. Denis, some peculiarities in the worship of the 'Greeks', i.e. the Romani from the Dalmatian cities.⁶² There was one fascinating remark that Amalarius made. For him, the inhabitants of the hinterland were *Ilirici*, rather than *Sclavi*, although in another place he mentioned 'wild Slavs', and made the plausible suggestion that in his perception those identities were different.⁶³ True, the term *Ilirici* represented a perpetuation of Roman colonial stereotypes, but it still showed an ambiguity of Frankish early perceptions about the area and its inhabitants, especially the assumption that they belonged to a 'Slavdom'.

John the Deacon and his sources used the same terminology as the Carolingians, distinguishing only between the Narentanian Slavs (Arentani, *Sclavi Narentani*, *Mariani*=Morjani=Sea people) and the

⁶⁰ Legates from Iader: ARF s.a. 806 *legati Dalmatarum*; cf. *Historia translationis s. Anastasiae* (Documenta 171.6); boundary settlement from 817: *Vita Hludowici 27: de finibus Dalmatinorum Romanorum et Sclavorum*; (for the same event ARE, s.a. 817 *pro Dalmatinorum causa*).

⁶¹ Godescalc, *De praedestinatione* 6; Budak 2008: 231–4. Cf. Fine 2006: 33–7, who took the sources at face value and assumed that they presented a 'reality'. See also Mužić 2007: 174–80, who argued that the *Dalmatini homines* from Godescalc were related to the indigenous population. See also the older, but still useful, discussion on Godescalc in Dalmatia in L. Katić 1932, and the more recent treatment of his manuscript in Grmek 1994.

⁶² *Epist. Amalarii* 6; *Versus marini*. On Amalarius' journey, see Cabaniss 1954: 33–42; McKormick 2001: 138–43, and in particular Vedriš 2005.

⁶³ *Quem usum Ilirici et omnis Grecia adhuc observat*, *Epist. Amalarii* 6 p. 249; *Sclavos rigidisque*, *Versus marini* 60.

region ruled by the dukes Mislav, Domagoj, Zdeslav, and Branimir, to whom is referred in the sources to as *principes* or *duces Sclavorum*.⁶⁴ His attitude and language towards the inhabitants of coastal Dalmatia was overwhelmingly negative, he established (or participated in, by repeating his sources) a Venetian colonial discourse of domination over the 'filthy barbarians' (*Sclavorum pessime gentes* 3.14, *Sclavorum pessimo duce* 3.16) which is no surprise taking into account their political rivalry with the Venetians, thus it is impossible to take his account at face value. John the Deacon mentioned the Croats only in relation to events of the year 912 (*Chroatorum fines* 3.40) and more frequently later, as the narrative approached his own times, although he still used the colonial generalising term Slavs, e.g. *Croati Sclavi* (4.31); *rex Sclavorum* (4.51, 4.77), or the general *Sclavi*, which showed us how the Venetians imagined the peoples from the eastern Adriatic coast, not how the people in Dalmatia expressed their identities.⁶⁵ John the Deacon also used a Dalmatian identity-label. In one place, he mentioned the raid of, "... *filthy nations of the Slavs and Dalmatians*", on Istria c. 875. However, in describing the events from his own times (997–998) the writer was aware of the *boundaries of the Dalmatians*, the *Dalmatian people*, or *Dalmatian soldiers*. 'Dalmatians' in John the Deacon did not mean exclusively the Romani from Dalmatian cities, as in the same context he noted the 'Roman' and 'Slav' castella on the island of Absara (Osor).⁶⁶

The papacy and the Roman church used the same terminology as the other Latin sources, which was clearly visible in the letters of Pope John VIII to the Dalmatian dukes Domagoj (1 letter), Zdeslav (1 letter), Branimir (2 letters) and the ecclesiastic authorities in Dalmatia (4 letters) between 874 and 880. When directly contacting the dukes the Pope used different titles to address them, such as *gloriosus dux*, *gloriosus comes*, *filius*, or *comes Sclavorum*, while when referring to them indirectly in the letters to the church authorities they were referred to as *principes* or *dux Sclavorum*. The people were referred to as

⁶⁴ E. g. *Hist. Venet.* 2.49, 3.2, 3.16, 3.21, 3.25. He also mentioned *Croatorum et Narentanorum principes* 4.45.

⁶⁵ Budak 2008: 233–6, see also Berto 2001: 254–6. Fine 2006: 37–41, omitted the event from 912, and took the source at face value, see the same face value approach in Borri 2008: 101.

⁶⁶ *Hist. Venet.* 3.14: *Sclavorum pessime gentes et Dalmacianorum*; 4.45 *in Dalmacianorum confinio* and *Dalmacianorum populi*; 4.50 *Dalmacianorum ac Veneticorum milites*; 4.48 *Romanorum quam Sclavorum castellis*.

the 'Slavs'.⁶⁷ The first mention of the Croat identity in the ecclesiastic sources occurred (probably) only in c. 925 in the conclusions of the first council in Spalatum, which mentioned the *episcopus Chroatorum*, and *rex Chroatorum*. This was the same year that Pope John X apparently addressed Tomislav (Tamislaus) as *rex Chroatorum*. The conclusions of the second council in Spalatum from 928 mentioned the *Croati*, and together with the letter of Pope Leo VI confirmed the conclusions which referred to the Nin bishopric as being in the *Croatorum terra*. The vernacular language was referred to as 'Slavic'.⁶⁸ The papal correspondence also referred to a Dalmatian identity; in the letter from 879 amongst others, Pope John VIII addressed, "*the other Dalmatian bishops*".⁶⁹

The Byzantine sources had a different approach to identities in early Carolingian Dalmatia than the Western sources did. As well as being an unreliable source for the earlier period, the DAI showed more reliable evidence for the times close to, or contemporary with, Constantine's own times in the mid-10th century. It provided a pretty accurate picture of Dalmatia from the tenth century, which recognised the extent of the Croat kingdom and its provinces-*županijas*, the other group identities from their sphere of interests such as the Arentani, Zachlumi, Terbounites, Docleans, Serbloi (Serbs), etc. The other Byzantine sources which reported on 10th century events were also concerned with noting the existence of the Croats, as we can see in the continuators of Theophanes and all the later sources.⁷⁰ The Byzantines obviously considered it necessary to distinguish between different groups in the region, and the sources for the contemporary identities were probably Byzantine supporters from the Dalmatian cities who were more familiar with the actual identities of their neighbours.⁷¹

The evidence for a self-determined identity from Carolingian Dalmatia in the written sources was very rare. The charter of Trpimir

⁶⁷ CD 1.5, 1.7–13 (= *Epist. Ioh.* 184, 190–1, 196, 206; *Epist. Ioh. Fr.* 9, 38–9). Only Zdeslav is directly called *gloriosus comes Sclavorum* (CD 1.9 = *Epist. Ioh.* 184), while Domagoj was called only indirectly *dux Sclavorum* (CD 1.7 = *Epist. Ioh. Fr.* 38). See also Matijević-Sokol and Zekan 1990 and Matijević-Sokol and Sokol 2005: 27–71 for a commentary and Ančić 2001b for the wider historical context of John VIII's letters to Branimir.

⁶⁸ CD 1.23–7; Budak 2008: 236–7; Fine 2006: 42–4, 54–8. These four letters all derive from the insufficiently reliable HSM and their content should be taken with caution.

⁶⁹ CD 1.13 (= *Epist. Ioh.* 196) *ceterique episcopis Dalmatinis*.

⁷⁰ DAI 29–35, and Theophanes Continuatus 6.20 and 6.22 (for 925 and 927).

⁷¹ Budak 2008: 226–31.

from 852 or the 840s, where he presented himself as a *dux Chroatorum*, as stated earlier, was preserved in a much later and corrupted transcript, but the scholarship mostly trusted its historical 'core'. His successor, and probably son, Muncimir in 892 also referred to himself as the *Croatorum dux*. There was also a late copy of the charter of Geyza II, the king of Hungary and Croatia, from 1158, which referred to a donation to the church of Spalatum by Branimir, the *dux Chroatorum*.⁷² Finally, it is worthwhile to mention one John the Croat (*Joannes Chroatus*). He was apparently the son of the Croat king who in the late 9th century lived as a hermit in Bohemia for 40 years, and presented himself as the son of the Croat king to the Bohemian duke who spoke with him. The manuscripts reporting John's life are late – 15th and 17th centuries, and not much can be said about the historicity of this story, but if accurate, would be important evidence for the self-perceived identity of the Croat elite.⁷³

Epigraphy

The epigraphic habit and public literacy disappeared from post-Roman Dalmatia in the late 6th century. The revival of public literacy, visible in the corpus of inscriptions in the 9th to 11th centuries is important evidence for publicly displayed statements of elite identity. The inscriptions, which began to appear in the very late 8th/early 9th centuries at first existed only in Latin, they were displayed in churches from that time, and mainly consisted of dedications and texts of a sacral character with only a few sepulchral inscriptions, all sponsored by members of the elite. This new form appeared as a result of a renewed Christianisation of this period, when Dalmatia came into the sphere of Carolingian political influences. There were two major geographical regions where these inscriptions appeared: Central Dalmatian coast with southwest Bosnia/western Herzegovina and North Dalmatia.⁷⁴ The inscriptions, stonework and 9th century churches that they were placed in, can be seen as a reinvention of the artistic and expression forms from Late Antiquity, but also strongly influenced by a new Carolingian ideological and religious *Correctio*, as well as influences

⁷² CD 1.3 (Trpimir) CD 1.20 (Muncimir, also preserved on a manuscript from the 16th century) CD 2.83 (Geyza II, preserved on a manuscript from the 18th century).

⁷³ Documenta 192. Fine 2006: 49 rightly doubted that his father was a king.

⁷⁴ Delonga 1996: 267–9, 358–60, see also Delonga 2001: 59, Map 2.

radiating from the Dalmatian cities of Spalatum, Tragurium and Iader.⁷⁵

It is interesting to note Slav names of the elite mentioned in these inscriptions, the Croat kings and *župans* – as subjects or objects of dedications.⁷⁶ Here, we can trace the first confirmed mention of Croat identity, the unknown *župan* from the church of St. Marta in Bijaći dated to the late 8th, or much more likely, the 9th century. The Croat identity is also displayed by one *župan* Svetoslav(?), who made the inscription in the times of king Držislav (969–997) from the St. Bartholomew monastery church in Kapitul, near Knin, on the inscription of the *dux* Branimir from Šopot near Benkovac, and finally on the inscription from the Church of St. Nicholas – Kula Atlagići near Benkovac from the 880s.⁷⁷ The ecclesiastic dedicants, on the other hand, such as the bishops, had late antique Latin ‘Roman’ names, and ‘Germanic-Lombard’ names were recorded amongst the dedicants who were missionaries.⁷⁸ Also interesting in this early period was that craftsmen-stonecutters had Latin-Germanic names and probably also belonged to the Benedictine order.⁷⁹

It is interesting to note that the elite never referred to themselves as Slavs in the inscriptions, but either presented themselves without identity-labels or they were self-determined as Croats. It is interesting to note the different perceptions of duke Branimir, who was seen as *dux Cruatorum* by himself, *dux Slavorum* by foreigners, the Benedictine(?) abbot Theudebert, and the *dux Clavitorum* in the inscription ordered by Pristina, one of his *župans*.⁸⁰ The term *Dux Clavitorum* from Pristina’s inscription from Scradin poses problems in its current interpretation, regarded as a corrupted *dux Sclavorum*, mostly because the Slavs did not refer to themselves as Slavs until the 12th century, and

⁷⁵ Delonga 1996: 275–9; Maraković and Jurković 2007: 368–9 (continuance); Delonga 1996: 279–81, 304–10; Maraković and Jurković 2007: 366–8 (Carolingian influences, mostly spread through the missionaries); Delonga 1996: 345–54, 360–1 (the Dalmatian cities). See also Jakšić 2001: 44–53.

⁷⁶ Delonga 1996: 295–301; Maraković and Jurković 2007: 362–5.

⁷⁷ LEMCro 10, 73, 130, 162, see Table 1.

⁷⁸ Delonga 1996: 302–8, esp. 307–8; Maraković and Jurković 2007: 367. The missionaries with “Germanic-Lombard names”: LEMCro 1, 3, 4, 174.

⁷⁹ Rapanić 1987: 131–8; Delonga 1996: 308; 2001: 60; Jakšić 2001: 51–2. The Slav names of stone-cutters were noted only in the 13th century.

⁸⁰ LEMCro 130 (himself); LEMCro 174 (abbot Theudebert); LEMCro 228 (*župan* Pristina).

there is no evidence that any Croat ruler did so.⁸¹ The name Clavitni was unknown from any other source,⁸² therefore it is only possible to make an assumption that the Clavitni were the power-base (clan?) of Branimir, who took power from Trpimir's successors by killing Zdeslav in 879, but was himself replaced by Trpimir's son Muncimir. On the other hand, it might have been a foreigner who wrote the inscription. It is important not to forget that this was still an illiterate society and very few of Pristina's people, including himself, would be able to read the inscription. The inscriptions were made by foreigners; therefore their misunderstanding of the indigenous identities and their stereotyping as 'Slavs' is possible. Consequently, we do not know what hides behind the term Clavitni.

The early medieval epigraphy from Dalmatia existed inside a religious-ideological and social sphere.⁸³ It also showed the first wave of (ideological) Christianisation in the heartland of the Croats – Ravni Kotari – Nin and Knin, but also in Parathalassia (Maritime) *županija* including Bijaći and Klis.⁸⁴ Through architecture and inscriptions we can see three dominating regions of the Croat kingdom: Ravni Kotari, Knin and the hinterland of the Spalatum-Tragurium (Bijaći and Klis). In addition to these, we can place a peripheral, but still culturally strongly related south-western Herzegovina (*županija* Hlebiana) with adjacent areas,⁸⁵ and the in-between area of Muć (Andetrium), which was close to the region of Klis and Bijaći.

The population of Dalmatia in the available sources from the 9th and 10th centuries was mostly perceived as the 'Other' by the outside observer who was only rarely interested in real-time group self-designations. Budak was right when he argued that the Latin language sources used their stereotypical, colonial perceptions of regional

⁸¹ A Russian *Primary chronicle* from the 12th century is the first instance of a self-determination of the group as Slavs, Curta 2001a: 350, see also above, p. 92 n.1.

⁸² The term Clavitni does, however, remind vaguely on Latin spellings of the group which inhabited the region around modern-day Livno in Herzegovina, *županija* Hlebiana of Constantine VII – for example Cleonia – Cleoni CD 1.20 (the charter of Muncimir from the year 892), Chleuini (CD 2.178 from the year 1182), Chleuliani/Cleuliani (CD 2.252 from the year 1194), etc.

⁸³ Delonga 1996: 358.

⁸⁴ Delonga 1996: 362–4.

⁸⁵ In addition, the wider area of south-western Herzegovina (Livno, Drvar, Posušje, and Grude) showed a tradition of pre-Romanesque sculpture, churches and epigraphy related to Dalmatia (especially Knin), LEMCro 232–233; Oreč 1984; Vrdoljak 1988; Glavaš 1990.

identities in order to depict the population of Dalmatia as Dalmatians or 'Slavs', even when they were in personal contact with them, such as Godescalc or the abbots of the Dalmatian monasteries, or in the papal correspondence with the Dalmatian dukes. This is not evidence that the population of Dalmatia and its leaders maintained a Dalmatian or Slavic identity, but only evidence that the labels 'Slavs' and 'Dalmatians' were taxonomic tools of our sources, used to simplify the existing heterogeneity of the identities in early Carolingian Dalmatia. They probably used this label because of the shared language of the local population, who might have started to develop some degree of identity on account of shared language, rather than a shared 'Slavdom'. The label 'Slav' was attached to the language only later.⁸⁶ The label 'Dalmatians' was used more as a general identity-label, which corresponded with the historical notion of a late antique *patria* Dalmatia, but also with the early Carolingian political structure which was based on it. Although there is no extant evidence from the early Carolingian period, we can assume that the population knew that the land they lived in was/is called Dalmatia, and it is very probable that they identified with Dalmatian identity especially when abroad, claiming Dalmatia as his/her *patria*. The label 'Slavs' on the other hand was used by the sources in order to depict all those who were not Romani from the Dalmatian cities and islands.

Although there were numerous regional and political groups in the region, only a few of those groups were mentioned by name, such as the Guduscani or Arentani, and only when those groups came into the spotlight of interest of our sources. The self-perception of the elite from the group which called themselves Croats and politically dominated the region from the early to mid-9th century was clearly publicly displayed in the preserved contemporary inscriptions. The political influence of *regnum Croatorum* was only subsequently reflected in the outside sources, which started to use 'Croat' as an identity-label more regularly from the 10th century.⁸⁷ Contrary to the recent argument of Fine, Croat identity had an attraction for the

⁸⁶ See above, pp. 162-5. Nichols 1993: 381-5 showed that the use of the label 'our language' (naš języкъ) was a clear identity-identifier in the *Life of Constantine and Methodius*. Only much later in the *Primary Chronicle* is when that common language was called the 'Slavic language' (языкъ словѣнскъ), which attached to the language an ethnonym.

⁸⁷ Budak 2008: 240-1.

rulers and members of the elite in this period, and it was displayed on inscriptions and in the donation charters. From Trpimir (and probably his predecessor Mislav), the political leaders of the Dalmatian *ducatus* presented themselves as the dukes of the Croats and even imposters who did not belong to the house of Trpimir, such as *dux* Branimir, had interest to publically maintain a Croat identity.

It is difficult to agree with both Budak and Fine that the identity of the non-elite majority in early medieval Dalmatia was Slavic, as the identity-label 'Slavs' in this period still represented a colonial pseudo-ethnic perception by the outside observers, rather than a self-designation of the people thus called.⁸⁸ The inhabitants of early Carolingian Dalmatia outside of the Dalmatian cities still had no time, means, or reasons to embrace the 'Slav' identity as their own. It is difficult to believe that they participated in the Slavic identity, which was imposed by outside observers in order to classify a heterogeneous population of Carolingian Dalmatia. They had no ideological tools for participation in a shared 'Slav' identity before the establishment of a more complex polity of the Croat kingdom in the late 9th and 10th centuries. The inhabitants of Dalmatia probably shared their narrow family and clan identities and almost certainly participated in the wider regional and/or political identities, such as Croats or Guduscani, and were aware that foreigners labelled them as 'Slavs' or Dalmatians. These identities did not exclude each other and were not static, unchangeable labels, but depending on the situation one could be self-defined as either a member of the clan, a member of the region/polity, such as a *Croatus* or *Guduscanus*, or claim Dalmatia as a *patria* when abroad, and present himself/herself as a 'Slav' for easier identity-identification to foreigners.

The Conversion?

The arrival of post-Roman Dalmatia into the Frankish political sphere was connected with the question of Croat baptism. There is no written evidence for a formal Croat conversion, apart from the controversial and confusing reports in the DAI, which reported that the Croats were baptised by the Byzantines and Rome in the 7th, early 9th and late

⁸⁸ The same error is made by Borri 2008, esp. 100–2 who does take the outside sources at face value as 'objective' reporters of ethnicity.

Table 2: Mentions of the Croat identity in the epigraphy

Location	Text	Date	LEMCro	Pages in Delonga 1996
Bijaći	[...Chro?]ATORV (m) ET IVPA [nus (-ano?) ...]	? (7–9th century)	10	52
Kapitul (Knin)	[... Svetos]CLV DVX HROATOR(um)	969–997	73	108–109
Šopot (Benkovac)	+BRANIMIRO COM[mes] DVX CRUATORV(m) COGIT[avit...]	879–892	130	166–167
Kula Atlagići (Benkovac)	[...Chroa]TORV(m) F[ecit?]	880–890	162	194

Table 3: Mentions of the ‘Slav’ identity in the epigraphy

Location	Text	Date	LEMCro	Pages in Delonga 1996
Nin, church of St. Michael	(in a times of) B[ra] NNIMERO DUX SLCAUORUM	879–892	174	207–208
Ždrapanj near Skradin	[Br]ANIMERO DVCE(m) CLAVITNORV(m) EGO PRISTI[na] IVPANVS C[...]	879–892	228	252

9th centuries.⁸⁹ The indirect evidence that Christianity was spread into Dalmatia came from the travelling monks: Godescalc in the 840s and Amalarius in the early 810s, both of whom observed the local

⁸⁹ DAI, 29.70–8 (all ‘Slavs’ from the region received baptism from the Byzantine emperor Basil I in the late 9th century), DAI, 30.87–90 (the Croats received baptism

peculiarities in the service amongst the *homines Dalmatini* (Godescalc) or *Ilirici* (Amalarius), and failed to notice the existence of 'pagans' in the region.⁹⁰ The material record showed significant building activity in the sphere of sacral architecture in littoral Dalmatia in the 9th century onwards. The grave-goods in the 'Old-Croat' cemeteries ceased to be used in c. mid-9th century, apart from small jewellery, such as earrings, and the cemeteries started to be relocated from the older locations to positions around churches and in churchyards.

The scholarship was divided in its views on the so-called conversion of the Croats. One view was that the Croats were converted to Christianity in the 7th century, under the influence of the ecclesiastic structures which survived in the Dalmatian cities immediately after their supposed settlement, as the Byzantine narrative in chapter 31 of the DAI claimed.⁹¹ The other view was that the Croats were converted by the Frankish missionaries who arrived in Dalmatia in the 9th century, probably from Aquileia.⁹² More recent Croatian scholarship has supported firmly the thesis of the Frankish impact on the Croat conversion in the 9th century, and is more ready to approach the complexity of the problem of conversion, distinguishing between the elite Christianity and the popular forms of Christianity, which existed at the same time.⁹³ The changes in spiritual life in Dalmatia did not exist isolated from the contemporary developments in the post-Roman and early medieval West. A comparative perspective will help us to understand the wider context of these changes in Dalmatia, which are visible in the intense church-buildings and the shift in burial custom from furnished burials to the cemeteries positioned around churches.

from the Pope after defeating the Franks in the time of Porinos); DAI, 31.31–4 (the Croats received baptism from Rome, but under the auspices of Heraclius in the time of Porga).

⁹⁰ Godescalc, *De praedestinatione* 6; Epist. Amalarii 6 p. 249.

⁹¹ Mandić 1963: 109–44.

⁹² Šišić 1925: 308–9; Klaić 1971: 191–208; Belošević 1997: 118–36; Ančić 2001a: 35–9. See also Lj. Maksimović 1996 who argued for a gradual Christianisation from the 7th century (assuming that Croats and Serbs arrived in that period), which accelerated with the establishment of more complex political entities in the 9th century.

⁹³ Budak 1993; 1994: 79–92; Goldstein 1992: 131–6, 169, used the concepts of clerical and popular Christianity, developed earlier, as for example in Le Goff 1967. See Budak 1996, who argued for a gradual Christianisation. Also Sokol 2006, esp. 156, who criticised the idea of a gradual conversion and assumed a sudden conversion of the Croats c. 850/855, and assumed that the cessation of grave-goods in the 'Old-Croat' cemeteries was linked to their baptism.

The mid-late Merovingian period in Gaul saw an important shift in burial customs (late 7th/early 8th centuries), which later spread to other parts of the post-Roman West, such as the Rhineland and Bavaria. The disappearance of furnished burials in early medieval Europe was not due to the acceptance of Christianity by the 'pagans', but should be seen as a consequence of the different social, spiritual and political changes which occurred simultaneously. The importance of publically displayed grave-goods for the representation of elite-status during the burial diminished, as the domination of a hereditary nobility became entrenched. The focus of burial moved away from a display of goods during burials, to liturgical rituals which enabled the salvation of the soul of the deceased. The exclusivity of grave goods and their positioning in graves was replaced by burials in prestigious locations, such as churches and small cemeteries, where the new hereditary elite and their clients were buried. Social identity was now expressed through grave-markings, the positioning of the graves in the cemetery, the withdrawal of funerary rites into the domain of archaeological invisibility through prayers and church service. The elite could still show their social position through lavish gifts to the Church, instead of displaying grave-goods during burial.⁹⁴

Christianity was not a static and unchangeable religion, it was in a state of flux, constantly changing and negotiating its role in society. The Carolingian period brought new attitudes towards death into the West. As Paxton showed in his important work, the early medieval church transformed its relationship towards death and synthesised the heterogeneous popular and religious beliefs into rituals around illness, death and burials in the period c. 750–820. At the same time there developed the notion that burials should and must be positioned within churchyards, as the Church in the post-Roman West did not bother too much with burial locations and the control of burial practices.⁹⁵ Changes in theological interpretations, popular perceptions of the afterlife and increased concern with the welfare of the soul, made

⁹⁴ See the classical study of Young 1977, and more recently Halsall 1992b; 1998; James 1992; Schke 1999; Effros 2003: 175 ff., esp. 211–7, etc. Social identity in unfurnished 'Christian' burials: Hadley 2002; Hadley and Buckberry 2005; the gifts to the Church, Innes 1997.

⁹⁵ Paxton 1996, see also Young 1977: 65–6; Bullough 1983: 185–90; Effros 1997a. The extent to which the Church controlled burial practices from the 7th–8th centuries was increasing, but was not total, depending on the region and period, see Halsall 1995b: 247–65; Innes 2000: 35–40; Geake 2003: 266–7.

the use of grave goods ineffective in the ritual expression of the late Merovingian period, which placed more emphasis on Mass and the psalms.⁹⁶ The social and spiritual reasons could not be taken alone as an explanation for the changes in the burial rites. The intertwining of Carolingian political interests and missionary zeal were useful in the purely political actions such as the attempts to extinguish the identity of the conquered Saxons, or to bring under control the freshly conquered Avar lands by sending missionaries and establishing ecclesiastic structures.⁹⁷ There were other reasons for the cessation of the use of grave-goods, which should also be taken into account, such as economic factors, including the increase in taxation by the more complex and structured secular and ecclesiastic authorities.⁹⁸

In the same period, when the use of grave-goods declined, the Carolingian Empire started to use the reorganised and expanding Christianity of the Frankish church as an organised ideology, which justified the power of the emperor, and strengthened the power of the *potentes*, rather than the *pauperes*.⁹⁹ This model of ideological Christianity was a very tempting export, which was adjusted to regional circumstances by the missionaries, and used by the 'pagan' elites on the Carolingian periphery in order to strengthen and justify their domination in society, through establishing their domination as a hereditary right.¹⁰⁰ The changes in the West were comprehensive and far-reaching, not only in religious or political domains, but related to the way in which society was organised. What scholarship saw as the 'Age of Conversion' in the Carolingian period was actually the spread of religious, social, political and cultural templates, which were developed in the late Merovingian and early Carolingian period in Frankish territories in the neighbouring areas. It was a two-sided process of acculturation, which had all the characteristics of a global process, such as so-called 'romanisation' from antiquity, which was mentioned earlier, (pp. 60–1). Recognisable 'global' features were spread through the influence of the Carolingian Empire and the fervent zeal of the missionaries and

⁹⁶ Young 1977: 49–57; Effros 2002: 139 ff.

⁹⁷ Effros 1997b (Saxons); *De Conversione* 6 and Wolfram 1979 (the conversion of the former Avar lands).

⁹⁸ Boddington 1990; Geake 1997: 125 f.; 1999; Hadley 2002 (economic constraints).

⁹⁹ Smith 2005: 217–52.

¹⁰⁰ Evans 1989: 284–6 for Dalmatia and Croats; Urbańczyk 1997; 2003 for Northeastern Europe, see Angerendt 1986 for England.

negotiated by the regional, 'local' communities, which adjusted it to their needs and traditions. The result was the development of specific political and religious institutions in the early medieval West, which were connected by common features, and divided into regional interpretations of these features.¹⁰¹

As discussed earlier (pp. 136–46), the 'Old-Croat' burials of the 'pagan' horizon did not display Christianity or paganism in Dalmatia, but were evidence for the active construction and display of social identity, gender and age through burial practices. A certain number of migrants arrived in post-Roman Dalmatia, but neither in overwhelming numbers, nor did they bring an organised 'pagan' religion and cause the disappearance of Christianity in the Dalmatian hinterland. The ecclesiastic infrastructure disappeared and late antique Christianity evolved into a specific form of spiritual life which incorporated popular beliefs with Christianity. The whole construct of the 'Croat baptism' in the historiography was based upon confusing accounts from the DAI and the premise that the Croats arrived in Dalmatia as 'pagans' who should be baptised. There is no evidence that the Croat conversion ever occurred as a single formal event. The scholarly discourse on the 'conversion of the Croats' was related to a longer process of change, which was visible through the development of new ecclesiastic and secular structures in Dalmatia.¹⁰²

This process of change is shown well in the architecture from the early medieval period in the Dalmatian coastal areas. The Dalmatian cities had very brief, temporary influences, while their hinterland was more profoundly influenced by the Carolingian models.¹⁰³ New churches arose on the places which showed traces of an Antique or Late Antique presence, or the rebuilding of late antique churches in new frameworks which radiated from the Carolingian models, such as the church in Žažvić. Most of the early medieval churches in the hinterland were built in the spot of the late antique churches, such as St. Bartholomew in Galovac, probably St. Martha in Bijaći, St. Michael in Brnaze (Ivkovića glavica) near Sinj, St. Anselmus and St. Mary in Nin, and today the non-existing churches in Morinje, Pađeni and Kljaci near Drniš.¹⁰⁴ Even the centre of Croat Christianity, the seat of the

¹⁰¹ See Pluskowski and Patrick 2003 on the plurality of Christianities in the Age of Conversion.

¹⁰² Alimov 2008: 110–13.

¹⁰³ Jurković 2001: 17–31.

¹⁰⁴ Ivkovića glavica: Milošević 2000b: 182–4 (no. 245).

episcopus crovatorum – Nin, in all certainty continued to be a Christian centre, and became the seat of the Croat bishop.¹⁰⁵ Good examples of the new style are the hexagon churches, or the three-foil sanctuaries, such as the church of the Holy Saviour at the source of the river Cetina, St. Caecilia in Biskupija-Knin, and the Church at Lopuška glavica.

The Carolingian social and spiritual revolution in Dalmatia claimed its inheritance from the past. It coincided with the rise of the new elites, who created a cultural landscape with defined and easily recognisable symbols of their dominance and power in society. The Dalmatian acculturation with the Carolingian models recombined claims on cultural inheritance from antiquity, but also an implementation of the Carolingian architectural models, such as the *westwerk*, hexagon churches, three-foil sanctuaries and three-apsidal sanctuary. The crucial role of the Frankish missionaries as intermediaries in this interaction between global and local models cannot be underestimated.¹⁰⁶ The links of the new Christianity and new Dalmatian elites are best visible in the Latin inscriptions in the churches which commemorated members of the elite who sponsored the building of these churches. The church of St. Mary in Biskupija was probably one of the first churches built in this process and was used as a mausoleum for the elite family, which showed an intermediary stage of this process in Dalmatia, the connection between furnished burials and the use of a church-building for the display of elite status – similar to the roughly contemporary elite mausoleums in Moravia.¹⁰⁷

Christianity was present in this or that way throughout the 'Dark Ages' in the 7th and 8th centuries in Dalmatia, and the spread of Carolingian spiritual models of Christianity in the 9th century was not a reason for any indigenous resistance. In this way Dalmatia was different from Northwestern and Northeastern Europe, and closer to the processes which occurred in the post-Roman West. The church-building frenzy, the change of burial rites and the relocation of the 'Old-Croat' cemeteries were not a consequence of the sudden or gradual introduction of Christianity, but rather evidence for social,

¹⁰⁵ Jakšić 1995: 41–2.

¹⁰⁶ Jurković 1995; 2001: 23–31; Maraković and Jurković 2007: 369–70, see also Ančić 2005a: 221–5.

¹⁰⁷ Sokol 2006: 167–70 dated it very early to the 9th century; see Schulze-Dörlamm 1993 for elite mausoleums in Moravian churches of this period.

religious and political changes, in particular for the stratification of society and the rise of the hereditary elites.

Becoming Croat

The expansion of the larger and more sophisticated polities did cause a rapid social transformation into the 'peripheral', or border areas, where those polities came into touch with societies which had lesser social and political complexities. Thus, confronting the imperialism of the more complex state, the less complex societies started to develop more sophisticated social structures of their own. A good example was the Roman Empire, the expansion of which caused a 'politogenesis' of the peoples on its borders. The indigenous Iron Age polities in Western and Central Europe were an indigenous reaction of the process of Roman expansion in the first century BC, rather than already pre-existing 'ethnicities'.¹⁰⁸ They appeared in the sources, dominated by the Graeco-Roman elite, only when achieving a certain level of social complexity, and they were recognised only in their terminology as the 'Others', 'barbarians', and used to show everything they were not. The Roman practice, which the Merovingian and Carolingian intellectual elites embraced, was to recognise these less complex political institutions on their frontiers usually through ethnonyms, *ethnos* or *gens*. Therefore, we do not really know whether those political communities existed before coming into the zone of Carolingian imperialism, or that the Carolingian imperialism caused their formation as a result of cultural interchange, defence, or the adoption of more efficient ways that the indigenous elites imposed their domination within their own societies.

The attacks of Charlemagne's armies on Central Europe and the destruction of the Second Avar qaganate enabled a restructuring of the political identities in the whole region. Our Frankish sources suddenly started to recognise dozens of new political identities which existed in former Avaria and its surroundings, instead of seeing it as filled with stereotypical and pseudo ethnic Avars or 'Slavs'.¹⁰⁹ What the scholars saw as a construction of ethnicities occurred from the perspective of an outside observer, such as the Frankish annalists, who tried to

¹⁰⁸ Wells 1999: 33, 57; 2001: 31–2.

¹⁰⁹ Pohl 1987: 44; Katičić 1990b; Štih 1995b: 38–42.

describe the process of 'politogenesis', i.e. 'state-making', by labelling different polities with ethnonyms, which they later used with consistency regardless of whether this identity existed or not. They were not simply regional or ethnic identities, they were politically active and self-conscious entities, recognised as such by the external sources, and held together by ideological and political discourses, which legitimized the power of their elites and ruling structures.¹¹⁰

Scholars have already pointed out that the earliest Croat identity appeared to be the social identity of new hereditary elites which formed in the 9th century,¹¹¹ so the conclusion that the term 'Croats' was originally not an ethnicity is not a terrible novelty. The ethnic titles of post-Roman rulers did not represent an ethnicity as a unifying ideology of the group; they rather reflected the political unity of certain territories. According to Gillett, ethnic titles such as *rex Francorum* were not necessarily a self-determination, but an administrative title.¹¹² *Mutatis mutandis*, the title that *dux Cruatorum* duke Branimir and his predecessors used, might well be a title which was the consequence of political sophistication in Dalmatia, the process of 'politogenesis' and the integration of Dalmatian elites into the Carolingian political structures, rather than a reflection of the already existing 'Croatness' before the 9th century.

Thus, the Croats became one of the identities of the 9th century, one of the politicised communities which fought for political domination in early medieval Dalmatia. By discarding the possibility of an existence of a Croat 'tribal alliance', prevalent in the older historiography, we can link the earliest Croat identity with the identity of the new hereditary elite from the triangle between Nin, Knin and Skradin. This new elite replaced the 'Big-men' from the late 7th and early 8th centuries, finding different and more permanent ways to establish their domination in society as hereditary. They were involved in the heterogeneous political system on the Carolingian periphery, established as the *ducatus* of Dalmatia and Liburnia, part of the Friulian march, and used the chance to take the leadership from the Guduscan elite, after the Frankish defeat by the Bulgars in 828. The Croat identity remained

¹¹⁰ Štih 1995b: 22–34 for the Carantanians, using the term 'tribe' for a political institution. See also Lienhart 2006.

¹¹¹ Pohl 1988: 16; 1995: 223; Fine 2000: 212–15; Curta 2006: 141–4 (in different contexts).

¹¹² Gillett 2002b See also Goetz 2003: 622–3, 627–8: the simultaneous formation of the peoples and political institutions in post-Roman Europe was a common place.

invisible in the outside sources for a long time, mostly because our chief sources – the Frankish Annals – lost interest in the region after the Friulian march was reorganised in 828. However, the Croat elite showed that ‘Croatness’ existed as a self-definition and that they had a need to claim it and represent it on their inscriptions.

The question whether the Croats were migrants to Dalmatia or the indigenous population is not important. The earliest Croat identity we know of appeared with the disappearance of a structural Avar continuum and the establishment of new power-structures in Dalmatia which were established on a new social and spiritual system from the West, indigenous regional polities – *županijas*, and the use of the ancient past as a justification for that power. The appearance of the earliest Croat identity occurred in the nexus between global changes and the tradition of the local population which reinterpreted these changes and adjusted them to their cultural *habitus*. The original identity of the elite from the triangle Nin-Skradin-Knin was in time linked with the polity in Dalmatia, which arose from the Frankish *ducatus* of Dalmatia and Liburnia. This polity, ruled by the dukes of the Croats, became a kingdom, the *regnum Chroatorum* in the 10th century. The claims of Croat identity evolved in time and become connected with a sense of belonging to the Croat kingdom, or with claims to a hereditary elite status inside the kingdom, so it is impossible to look for a single narrative of ‘Croatness’ in medieval times, but rather to look for different ways in which Croatness was expressed.

CONCLUSION

The problem of the earliest Croat identity continues to intrigue scholars, but also Croatians themselves searching for their origins, wherever they live: Croatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, the diasporic communities of the Croatian immigrants in Western Europe, United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, etc. The perception of origins strongly influences strategies of negotiating Croatian identities in the present. As shown earlier, it was the notion that the Croats arrived from somewhere into post-Roman Dalmatia, as part of the wider 'migration of the South Slavs', which still shapes in many ways scholarly and popular perceptions of the earliest Croat origins. This view was in many ways established parallel with the ideologies of panslavism and the Yugoslav idea in 19th century historiography, which functioned well in a national-romanticist framework. The works of historians and linguists such as Rački, Jagić or Šišić constructed a 'grand-narrative' of Croat history, presenting it as a 'historical truth'. The political construct of a southern Slav state, whether as a unitary kingdom (1918–1941) or as a communist-led socialist federation (1945–1991), accepted this discursive 'knowledge' as politically correct, and incorporated it into the versions of the past which were presented throughout this period. The disintegration of Yugoslavia and Yugoslav political ideologies opened new possibilities for analysing the past, although this opportunity has scarcely been attempted in the 1990s and 2000s by scholarship which deals with post-Roman and early medieval Dalmatia.

Curta's view of the 'Slavs' as an initially cognitive construct of the sources trying to describe a common cultural *habitus* that was foreign to them, has opened the way for new approaches to the problem of the transformation of identities in post-Roman Dalmatia and the whole space of Illyricum. The first and most important point Curta made was that the 'Slavs' were nothing but a common name that masked the heterogeneity of a trans-Danubian population that changed the way in which they constructed their social identity in the 6th century – therefore, the Slavs did not exist as a 'people', or a 'group of peoples/tribes' with a sense of unity or a common homeland. 'Antes', 'Venethi', and 'Sclavenes' were simply different perceptions of the people who shared a common cultural *habitus* by outside observers. Our sources,

written by members of the Mediterranean elite, reflected a subjective perception of the parallel narratives of the process we know as the 'Slav migrations'. No less important is the second point, which showed that the Slavic 'migrations' were chaotic population movements of the smaller groups, not a 'Slavic flood', or an organised colonisation of the Balkan Peninsula. Both of these points are in sharp disagreement with the constructs of a 'historical truth' related to the earliest Croat identity and history, and provide valid reasons to re-examine the sources – written and material, on which these 'historical truths' are based.

The written sources for the 'Slav' and Croat migrations in post-Roman Dalmatia are scarce and unreliable; the sources that are not contemporary with the 6th and 7th centuries should be almost fully disregarded. This relates in particular to the *Historia Salonitana* of Thomas the Archdeacon and the *Chronicle* of Presbyter Diocleas, the literary narratives were deeply entrenched in local oral histories, historical memories and popular legends from the post-Roman period. Even the *De Administrando imperio*, for a long time regarded as a 'gold mine' for fragments of historical 'truths' by the scholarship, does not appear as a useful source for events from the 7th century. The narratives on the Croat migrations and baptism in the DAI should be seen as a literary construct, a combination of Byzantine 'orientalism', a practical political manual and ideological-political propaganda, but also traces of historical memories from the region. The *Origo gentis* of the Croats in chapter 30 of the DAI preserved an ideological narrative of the group that identified itself as 'Croats', rather than the tradition and history of the 'Croat people'.

We cannot by any means disregard the importance of population movements and the arrival of the immigrant 'Slav' groups in Dalmatia, either in the 7th or in 9th centuries, and their impact on the construction of early medieval identities. This book never denied migration of the 'Slav' groups. In the 7th century there appeared the remains of trans-Danubian groups which were shaped in contact with the Byzantine limes. They shared a common cultural *habitus* but had no sense of a common identity, apart from the identity of the smaller family group or clan. In the 9th century there arrived groups which formed their cultural identity within the Avar qaganate, and established their political identities using cultural matrices recently developed in the Carolingian world. Both of these groups brought new cultural elements into Dalmatia, and we can see them reflected mostly in toponyms, but probably also in symbolical links with the north, such as

the custom of funerary cremation. There is no doubt that those immigrants contributed to the transformation of identities in post-Roman Dalmatia, but they were not a reason *per se* for this transformation.

Material evidence from this period shows the process of transformation of the cultural *habitus* in Dalmatia, which was best seen through the change of burial customs from late antique to the 'Old-Croat' cemeteries. However, the appearance of furnished burials and cremation from the 7th to 9th centuries is not evidence for a mass-migration of pagan Slavs/Croats into post-Roman Dalmatia. The use of grave-goods in Dalmatian row-grave cemeteries is comparable to similar practices in the wider area of the post-Roman West, in particular Merovingian Gaul and early Anglo-Saxon England. There, grave goods and cremation were used as a strategy to actively represent the gender and social identity of the deceased and to construct origins or links with the past, but they were not a passive reflection of 'pagan' cults or ethnicity. Links between the disappearance of furnished burials and the conversion of pagans to Christianity in the post-Roman West has been firmly rejected by recent scholarship. This disappearance of furnished burials is shown to reflect the rise of hereditary elites, and the change in popular and religious attitudes towards death and burial. Dalmatia was in a peculiar position, as it was positioned between the post-Roman West, the Merovingians and Langobards, the Avar 'continuum' and the Byzantines. The process of social disintegration and rebuilding started in the 7th century, later than in the post-Roman West, but through material evidence from the Dalmatian cemeteries we can see that Dalmatia followed a similar path: the representation of status and gender through grave-goods, a rising complexity of burial assemblages and finally the disappearance of grave-goods and the moving of cemeteries into spaces around churches. Furnished graves from 'Old-Croat' cemeteries did not show ethnicity or 'paganism', but rather different strategies for displaying internal competition and status inside communities.

Both material and written evidence which was used to construct a 'grand-narratives' of Croat 'migration' in the 7th century and Croat 'conversion' from paganism have been shown to be inadequate for explaining accurately what was happening in post-Roman Dalmatia in light of the most recent scholarly methodologies. The transformation of identities in post-Roman and early medieval Dalmatia occurred through a number of different interlapping processes; there is no longer any need for a single 'grand-narrative' in the scholarship. By discarding

the migration and the arrival of the Slavs/Croats as the chief explanation for the change of identities from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages, this book has focused its attention on the process of identity change in the pre-Slavic Dalmatian population of the same period.

One of the most obvious problems with the 'grand-narratives' on the Croat migration is the focus on 'Slav' migrants and the almost total ignorance of the pre-Slavic population in Dalmatia. Scholars have frequently misunderstood the pre-Slavic population from Late Antiquity as direct descendants of the indigenous Iron Age population and labelled them as 'more-less romanised Illyrians'. This view heavily distorts the complexity of the existing ways in which the indigenous population constructed their identities inside the Roman imperial umbrella-identity. They were Romans, Christians, Dalmatians, citizens and peasants, soldiers and civilians, poor and rich, freely combining and recombining all those identities, depending on different social and micro-regional settings in which they lived and constructed their identities.

The restructuring of identities in Dalmatia was accelerated by the political and military withdrawal of the East Romans in the early 7th century. The pre-Slavic population ceased to be Roman for many different reasons. Illyricum disintegrated when it appeared outside of the imperial framework, Dalmatia was left to its own devices from the Western and later the Eastern Roman Empire, without the possibility to maintain a Roman identity outside of the Roman political infrastructure. The urban Christianity of Salona and the Dalmatian coastal cities was never firmly rooted in the hinterland, so that the Church organisation could not be the sole base for a restructuring of identities, except in the urban coastal communities. The newly created identity of Romani in the post-Roman Dalmatian cities was based on their exclusiveness, probably for their military and political vulnerability, so that the hinterland became excluded from this new identity. Such a situation influenced the population of the hinterland to find new ways for defining themselves. This was not a linear process: regional and local cultural templates were firmly built into the construction of identities which were recognised by outside sources as the stereotypical 'Slavness'. The identity-shift from non-Slavic to 'Slav' identities is key for the understanding of the appearance of the early medieval Slavic identities in the region, and in particular the reasons why this transition happened.

The 7th century crisis and the withdrawal of the Eastern Romans from most of Southeastern Europe accelerated the ruralisation and development of specific spiritual forms between Christianity and popular beliefs in the countryside. That was the critical point which triggered the process of identity-change in post-Roman Dalmatia, rather than a phantom 'Slav flood' pouring over Dalmatian 'desolate and virgin lands'. Changes in burial custom and the appearance of furnished burials were not a reflection of a change in the population, although the arrival of some migrants from the north might and should be anticipated in the 7th and 8th centuries. The roots of this transition should be searched for in the first late 5th and 6th century row-grave cemeteries in Dalmatia, with the so-called 'Ostrogothic' furnished graves. The position of the deceased and his/her family was shown through a complex process of cremation burials, different forms of stone architecture in graves, wooden coffins or sarcophagi from Late Antiquity, and finally through the position of cemeteries. We may anticipate also that in the late 7th and early 8th centuries Dalmatia was a society fragmented into small rural communities, which were dominated by 'Big-men' who competed for dominance in their communities, using furnished burials to display their influence. This extremely fragmented society entered a new phase with global changes and the imperial ambitions of a Carolingian polity and recovered Byzantium in the early 9th century. Even before that, in c. 750–775, we can see the rise of new, hereditary elites, developing power inside sub-regional chiefdoms (*županijas*) and competing for dominance on a regional level, using internal alliances and later external support from the Carolingian Empire. The expansion of an ideologically charged Christianity and interaction with more complex political institutions, such as the Carolingian commonwealth and the recovered Byzantine Empire, caused the appearance of new political identities and new ideological discourses.

The disappearance of general literacy and therefore the impossibility of maintaining late antique cultural and ideological discourses in the hinterland had the result that in a few generations the identity of the pre-Slavic populations transformed. 'Becoming Slavs' is the process that relates equally to the arrivals and to the indigenous population, because both of them in fact 'became Slavs', negotiating ways and symbols to express their own identities and thus impacting the transformation of a cultural *habitus*. Through crudely oversimplifying, we can say that the indigenous population transformed by acquiring a different

language, Slavic *lingua franca*, which enabled easier communication, in the same way that Latin was adopted by their ancestors. 'Slav' immigrants transformed through adaptation to the existing territorial organisation, which we can see in the example of the *županijas*; and both changed through extreme political fragmentation and the development of regional identities. The 'Old-Croat' cemeteries from the 7th – 9th centuries give us, alas, a very limited insight into the entirely new ways of expressing identity in post-Roman Dalmatia.

The Margetić-Ančić view of additional migrations in the late 8th/early 9th centuries should not be discarded, and is certainly worthy to be taken into account in all future scholarly discussions of early Croat identity; but with the existing state of evidence, it is not fully convincing that the Croats as a political force arrived from outside in early medieval Dalmatia in that period. Some population movements under the Carolingian auspices might have indeed been occurring after the fall of the Avar qaganate, as Ančić postulated, bringing some migrant groups from Central Europe into Dalmatia, but did not necessarily cause a large-scale population change. The process of 'becoming Slav' and 'becoming Croat' does show a significant degree of heterogeneity and the absence of linear developments. Whether they were arrivals or indigenous does not matter, as Croats of the 9th century were an identity created beyond the dichotomy of 'indigenous' – 'migrants'. The Croats were only one of the competing identities of this region, and when the house of Mislav and Trpimir acquired power over the Dalmatian duchy, the Croat identity became in time a way for rulers and elites to legitimize their power.

The first centre of power which established regional dominance in the early 9th century was based behind the Velebit Mountain, in Lika (Guduscani), and in the mid-9th century regional power became the coastal region between the rivers Zrmanja and Krka, which united the elites of Nin and Knin into a single political identity. Profiting from the alliance with the Carolingian Empire Borna, and probably his predecessor, positioned the group named the Guduscani as political leaders of the area, which encompassed ancient Liburnia Tarsaticensis where the Guduscani had their powerbase and the lands between the rivers Krka and Cetina, subduing polities based in Nin, Knin, Klis and Bijaći, and probably the inland Livno region. The fall of Borna's successors, whose position was sanctioned within the Friulian march, most certainly corresponded with the restructuring of the march after Baldric's defeat by the Bulgars in 828. This political change opened the

doors for an anti-Guduscan alliance of elites from Ravni Kotari to Cetina. With *dux* Mislav and his successors, they took power and gradually loosened links with the Carolingian Empire. The elite of these polities defined themselves as Croats and their leader thus presented himself as the *dux Cruatorum*. Whether this self-identification existed before the rise of the Guduscani, or was constructed as its consequence, is so far impossible to be determined. At the same time, they were recognised by the outside as leaders of the 'Slavs'; 'Slavs' being the colonial term of the Carolingian intellectual elite for the population of the region, the descendents of the indigenous population and immigrants from the 7th century. In time, the lands of the *dux Cruatorum*, whose power was growing, started to be perceived as Croatia and the inhabitants of *regnum Chroatorum* as the *Chroati*. It enabled the population to 'become Croats', the construction of identity that unified the population, without excluding their pre-existing regional identities.

The *Origo gentis* of the Croats from chapter 30 of the DAI showed a development of the ideological discourse which 'showed' Croat identity through fictional blood-relations and the story of their arrival. Therefore, we should see the identity of the Croats through the development and maintenance of an elite discourse of the new elites in the 8th and 9th centuries. New hereditary elites were formed either prior to, or during the destruction of the second Avar qaganate, from the population of the region, on the intersection between the Romani, Byzantines, Franks and Avars, which were pressured to build more complex political formations in these circumstances. The process of acculturation between the migrations of the 7th century and the destruction of the qaganate was, although difficult to document, very active and fruitful in Dalmatia. It happened in a political vacuum in which Dalmatia was fragmented and dominated by regional magnates – the 'Big-men'.

Interaction created identity, thus, the identity of the Croats appeared in the interaction with the 'Other' and the formation of more complex political institutions. New elites were neither 'Slavic' nor indigenous, although they could appear as 'Slavic' to outside observers. They were the result of the earlier process of acculturation and social transition in the period of Avar domination. Prince Branimir could be a *dux Sclavorum* for foreign observers and a *dux Cruatorum* for himself and his followers, at the same time in the late 9th century. Croat identity was the self-identification of the ruling group and 'Slav' identity was a perception by the outside observer. This situation was reminiscent of

(although in a totally different historical and social context) the creation of political identities in pre-Roman Illyricum, which was the result of the expansion of Mediterranean 'globalisation' and the impact of political sophistication upon Mediterranean political institutions.

The most important conclusion is that there were two separate processes. The first was the process of acculturation between the indigenous population and immigrant groups, 'becoming Slavs', which resulted in the transformation of the cultural *habitus* that was perceived by outside observers as 'Slav', but was in fact hiding a heterogeneous population. This process occurred at the periphery of the Avar cultural 'continuum', together with extreme political fragmentation and in opposition to the newly developed identity of the Romani from the Dalmatian coastal cities. Thus, we can see 'becoming Slavs' as a complex process of transformation of cultural *habitus* in specific political circumstances, which separated the Dalmatian hinterland from the Mediterranean and repositioned it towards the continent, yet still on the periphery of Avar influence. Extreme political fragmentation and the absence of political forces in the neighbourhood did not require a development of political entities that would produce new identities – the population of post-Roman Dalmatia had no reason to construct and define their identities before the 9th century. Another process was the development of complex political entities, 'becoming Croats', which in changed political circumstances, after the disintegration of the qaganate, the foundation of *thema* Dalmatia and the building of the Carolingian Empire, caused a formation of political institutions, and new identities developed in the cultural *habitus* of Dalmatia from the Adriatic to the river Sava, and in southern Pannonia.

APPENDIX: LIST OF DALMATIAN RULERS¹

Borna	? ² – 821	<i>duces Guduscanorum</i>
Vladislav (Ladasclaus)	821 – 828?	
Mislav/Mojslav (Muisclaus)	829? – 842?	<i>duces Croatorum</i>
Trpimir (Trepimirus)	842? – 864? ³	
<i>Krešimir?</i>	(850 – 860)	
<i>Miroslav?</i>	(860 – 864)	
Domagoj (Domagoi)	864 – 878	
The sons of Domagoj	878	
Zdeslav (Sedesclaus)	878 – 879	
Branimir (Branimirus)	879 – 892	
Muncimir (Muncimirus)	892 – 910? ⁴	
Tomislav (Tamisclaus)	910? – 925	
Tomislav (Tamisclaus)	925 – 928?	<i>reges Croatorum</i>
<i>Trpimir II?</i>	928 – 935 ⁵	
Etc.		

¹ The list of rulers of Croatia given in Fine 2006: 563–5 is rather awkward in certain respects for this period. In particular, the idea that Mislav was a son of Vladislav, the placing of the mythical character of Ilko as a son of Domagoj, using Presbyter Diocleas as historical evidence to date Croat rulers in the 10th century, as well as the otherwise unmentioned ‘fact’ that Tomislav was a Moravian prince?!

² Višeslav (Visseslaus) was often dated to this period after Šišić 1925: 308–9, but without firmer evidence.

³ DAI mentioned Croat rulers, one Krešimir (Krasemer – Κρασημέρ), the son of the Croat ‘archon’ Trpimir (Terpemer – Τερπημέρ), and Miroslav (Mirosthlav – Μιροσθλαβ), the son of Krešimir, DAI, 31.44–5, 76–7. Earlier historiography dated them to the 9th century, Dümmler 1856: 394–7, 436; Manojlović 1902: 90–102; Šišić 1906: 43–4. However, Šišić 1925: 431–2 n. 1 changed his original opinion and dated them to the 10th century after Drinov 1876: 120–30, as king Trpimir II and his successors. Eggers 1995: 343–7, 350 criticised Šišić claiming that he invented king Trpimir II, who is otherwise unknown. Mužić 2007: 182–7 convincingly argued in favour of the older opinion of Dümmler and re-dated Krešimir in 850–860, and Miroslav to 860–864.

⁴ Eggers 1995: 343–7, 350 followed by Fine 2006: 563–5 placed Krešimir and Miroslav chronologically between Muncimir and Tomislav, forgetting that Krešimir was mentioned as the son of Trpimir in the DAI.

⁵ See note 3 above. Also, as noted earlier in the book, the evidence that Tomislav was the first Croat king rests on the insufficiently reliable HSM and should be taken with caution.

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